



MAGIC CHEF OF FIRE AND ICE

BOOK 01

Tang Jia San Shao

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Magic Chef of Ice and Fire

(冰火魔厨)

by

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Synopsis

Seven unique divine blades:

The Snow Goddess's Sigh – Blade of Morning Dew (Chen Lu)

The Flame God's Roar – Blade of True Sun (Zheng Yang)

The Free Wind's Gentle Hymn – Blade of Proud Sky (Ao Tian)

The Earth's Waking Rhythm – Blade of Long Life (Chang Sheng)

The Fate's Hexagram of Hundred Transformations – Blade of Jade Pearls

The Universe's Dawn – Blade of Holy Brilliance

Hell's Eternal Curse – Blade of Devil's Devouring

These are the seven divine blades. They are also the seven magic staves of Ice, Fire, Wind, Earth, Space, Light, and Darkness. And most importantly, the leader of them all..... The Kitchen Knife.

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used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Chapter 1.1 – Hunt Of The Ice And Snow Worshipper

Under the blazing sun, a tall and high spirited male was slowly moving with a child. The male wore a fiery red magic robe. Near the area of his upper abdomen is a flame embroidered in gold. This represents his status as a magister. Golden hair draped behind him and a distinctively angular bronze face that seemed as if it were peeled with a knife and chiseled with a hatchet. However, his brown eyes revealed a faint sorrow.

“Nian Bing, are you tired yet?” The man lowered his head as he asked the child in front of him.

The boy was only as tall as the man’s waist, together they had six points of resemblance. It was just that the boy’s facial lines were soft, yet they shared the same golden hair. Even though the boy’s age was still young, he still had a handsome appearance, even more eye-catching than the tall man. He possessed a pair of water blue eyes. His body appeared to be frail and weak. This is due to his tired, pale complexion.

He firmly shook his head, “Father, I’m not tired. Are we going to see Mom yet? I... I really miss Mom.”

The tall man raised his head and look at the blazing sun, it appeared as if the glaring sunshine didn’t have the slightest effect on him. “That’s right, We’re going to see your mother. It’s been ten years, and now you’re already ten as well. These ten past years, the world was big, but we’ve yet to find a place we can call home. Regardless, this time we must go see your mother. Even if the cost

is my life.”

Nian Bing’s age was still young after all, and didn’t fully understand his own father, “Why didn’t they let us see Mom?”

The tall man let out a cold groan, his eyes seemed to want to spout fire, “They, groan, They... Nian Bing, you are still young. Wait until you grow up, then you’ll understand. For your mother, father could pay everything. But I would hate to part with you, you are still so young. We’ve finally arrived at the village. Stay over there and wait for father, okay?”

“No, father, I want to go with you to find mother together. Mother doesn’t want me anymore. Could it be that you don’t want me either?” Nian Bing’s eye was a bit red. He tightly grasped his father’s hand.

The tall man took a scroll out of his bosom and put it in Nian Bing’s hand. “Do you remember how to use the evacuation magic scroll? It possible for you to go with me but we’ve reached a desperate moment. You must remember how to use this scroll. It will help bring you to a safe place. The day before yesterday, father drew a magic array at that place.”

Nian Bing with magic scroll in hand, cutely nodded and said, “Father, I understand now.”

The tall man sighed saying, “It is a shame the time we have is so brief, your talent is even greater than mine. If time had permitted I would have taught you much. Perhaps you could become the most

powerful fire mage in the continent. However, time does not allow me to wait any longer. If we don't hurry to the Ice God's Castle, then we will never see your mother again."

Nian Bing seemed to understand yet didn't but still nodded saying, "Father, from now on I must become a powerful fire mage like you."

Within the tall man's eyes displayed a trace of haziness, "I remember years ago, when I was together with your mother, we had once discussed this. What kind of magic should our child practice? She wanted the child to be an ice mage, I wanted fire. Since fire and ice cannot merge with one another, our child could only choose one. At the time, your mother said, if the child were a boy, he'd then study under me to become a fire mage. Were the child a girl, she'd study under her mother to become an ice mage. Now I remember it, as if she were right there in front of me, her words still ringing in my ears, but she's already gone. "

Saying it here, his voice unexpected sounded a bit proud, "I, a fire magister, swear to the heavens that I will stop the Ice Goddess's sacrificial inheritance ceremony, and take back my wife."

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Three days later.

It was a tall, hundred meter mountain peak. Although this precipitous mountain peak wasn't that tall, it still gave one a feeling of great height. The azurish gray form of the mountain

seemed to give off a sense of somberness and desolation. Although some vegetation grew, it was extremely sparse. Perhaps this was due to the precipitous topography of the mountain or perhaps it was due to the people walking up the foothills year round. If not for that, normal people would find great difficulty to climb such a precipitous mountain peak by foot. A large river surged from south to north. This is the Yang Guang Continent's famous Mother River, people call it the Azure River. The river traverses two-thirds of the Yang Guang Continent, close to two thousands kilometers. It's source is located at the northmost province. Sixty percent of this province's land is covered by a glacier. Every spring and summer, the glacier thaws and releases water into Azure River, reaching the distant ocean. The river is very wide, even the most narrow point is a hundred meters wide. The most wide point of the very is about a kilometer wide. The river was also known for it's clear and rapid flowing river water. It had nurtured several countries, repeatedly provided for ten provinces worth of people. Although there were times a flood would break out, each country has administered appropriate countermeasures. The people living by the river bank could live a tranquil comfortable life relying on the river to survive.

A precipitous mountain peak, with the summit only having an area of ten square meters. Suddenly, a fiery red rays of light appeared on the floor. There was a speck of light rapidly moving. In the blink of an eye, the outline of the speck became visible. It was a red hexagram. The summits temperature rapidly rose. Due to the increasingly scorching heat, the top of the red hexagram began rippling like water.

As the ripples slowly trembled, the red light abruptly suddenly grew in extensively. The surrounding magic elements seemed to cheerfully call out. Within the intense fluctuations within the

elements, a gray figure quietly emerged.

The staggering figure dropped out of the fiery red magic wave. It almost fell down on the floor. It turns out to be a child. He is the child that three days ago, followed his father to search for his mother, Rong Nian Bing.

Upon his small handsome face, there was an expression of fear. His short golden hair was in disarray. With weak his weak footing, he sat his butt on the ground. He gasped for breath in big mouthfuls. “Father, Mother, why? Why has it come to this?” Tears unceasingly flowed down his face. No matter what, the pain of losing one’s kin is difficult to bear. Let alone the fact that he is a child of barely tens years of age.

After crying for a while, the mentally fatigued Nian Bing curled up upon the hilltop’s boulder and fell asleep. With such a young age, his future prospects are vast and indistinct. He simply didn’t know what he should do with himself. Two radiant lights glowed within his heart, a dim red light and dim blue light. The surrounding fire element and ice element all began to gather toward his young body. This bizarre course of events continued for the period of a meal’s worth of time, before fading away.

Not knowing how long had passed, Nian Bing was waken up from his dreams by violent shaking and an aching body. Three slender figures were standing in front of him. From his stomach came an acute pain, he couldn’t help but cough. A bit of blood flowed from the corner of his mouth. From within the pit of the stomach area of the gray clothes, resided a footprint of yellow sand.

These three people all wore blue magic robes and had long blue hair that seemed to combine to make up the whole of their appearance. It seems as if their body was successfully condensed from ice. They gave people the feeling a having unpleasant ice-cold words. These three have an appearance that seems to be about forty years old. The person in the middle had blue crystal carvings of three snowflakes the size of a fingernail on his magic robe to the left of the pit of his stomach. The two beside him followed him. Obviously his status was a bit higher than the other two, since they only had one snowflake.

“To use the fire based instant movement magic spell scroll, what a waste for a child to use. The odor left behind is too distinct.” Said faintly by the mage in the middle.

Seeing these three people, Nian Bing’s charming small face immediately became distorted. “Ah , it’s you! You villains. You killed my mother! You killed my father!” Not knowing how he gathered enough the strength, Nian Bing had just enough to jump off the ground and rush through them. He had already forgotten about his own abilities as an elementary mage. He had only an urge within, instinct.

“Little bastard, Are you looking for death?” The mage on the left waved his right hand. A water bullet with a diameter of three inches shot out and directly hit the child’s upper abdomen. Water bullet was a most common magic spell, it’s attack power was not at all strong. Nian Bing let out a suppressed grunted, staggered backwards and tripped on a small table. His hand reached out to his surroundings, in order to stabilize his body, but received a bloody mouth hitting the side of a rock.

The mage in the middle glared at his companion for a bit, “That’s enough, he is but a child. I don’t want this child to experience too much suffering.”

“Yes, I respect the Ice and Snow Worshiper Elder.” He immediately gave a response to the mage, hurrying to retreat off to the side.

The Ice and Snow Worshiper looked at Nian Bing and calmly said, “Child, I originally didn’t wish to harm you. But no longer. You are their child. For the Ice God pagoda’s honor, you can no longer be allowed to exist. Hand over the Ice and Snow Goddess’s stone and I’ll give you a quick death.” Because of his status, he naturally wouldn’t use his hand to search but instead issue an order with an intangibly imposing manner.

Chapter 1.2 – Hunt Of The Ice And Snow Worshipper

Nian Bing slowly stood up. Though young, a severe coldness was contained within his eyes. A deep hatred ignited within his heart. “The Ice God’s Pagoda’s honor? Father was right. Though the Ice God’s Pagoda may appear righteous from the outside, they are nothing but trash. They want to get back the Ice and Snow Goddess’s Stone? Dream on. Even if I die I still wouldn’t give it to you. This is the last thing my mom gave me. You can all go to hell!” Without warning, two fists simultaneously flourished out, left red, right blue. These two rays of light, each with a distinct atmosphere, approached the three hooded Ice and Snow Priests. There were indeed fireball and waterball, two rank one spells, possible to cast without chanting an incantation. Ice and fire appeared simultaneously, a feat even Nian Bing himself didn’t think possible.

The light within Ice and Snow Worshiper’s eyes flashed and quickly chanted simple phrases, a gentle formless wall of watered emerged. The fire and water collided becoming mist. Suddenly he thought to himself, No good. I have to think of another plan, but there isn’t enough time.

The young body fell from the summit. At the time he jumped from the precipice, there wasn’t any hesitation, but only a splash. The silhouette did not appear to enter the river, only the faint ripples from the splash. Nian Bing’s words still echoed within the three ice and snow priests’ ears. They finally understood the meaning of the words that even dead he wouldn’t hand over the Ice and Snow Goddess’s Stone.

The Ice and Snow Worshiper stepped forward to the edge of the precipice, with a soft sigh said, “What an unyielding child.”

“Great Ice and Snow Worshiper, how could this happen? He was only that old. How could he use two types of magic?” The left Ice and Snow Priest looked below at the rapid river water with awe.

Ice and Snow Worshiper indifferently said, “That was not because of impressive magic power, but rather because he possessed Ice Master’s Ice and Snow Goddess’s Stone. Furthermore it had been merged with the Heavenly Flame God’s stone. Although he still was unable to use those two divine treasures to its fullest potential, to be able to cast simple elementary spells, just this is not worthy of awe. However, ice and fire in harmony... how he is able to use both elementary fire and ice magic simultaneously without conflict, even this escapes me. It seems that child possessed extremely great talent.”

The priest on the right said loudly, “It is a pity that we don’t have enough magic power to freeze the rapid river. Otherwise we would surely be able to obtain these two precious stones. Great Ice and Snow Worshiper, What is to be done with our mission? First, it may be better off to search for his body.”

Ice and Snow Worshiper glance at him, the coldness in his eyes could make the whole priest’s body quiver, no longer does he dare say more.

“Remember, to practice magic you must first cultivate the mind. Without a tranquil mind, your magic ability will be unable to reach higher levels. I had failed this task and I will undertake all

responsibility for this. Let us return. Oh Great Ice and Snow Goddess! Please grant me your wrath, deliver us to the lost, holy shore.” Not knowing how, an one meter magic staff had appeared in his hand. The staff’s body appeared to be a sparkling and translucent blue. He didn’t know how it was created. The staff’s head of eight claws collected magic power, like stars against the moon, massed about the eight spirit like fingers, grabbing onto a precious stone.

The magic staff slowly levitated off the ground, the ice element in the air gradually grew berserk and the sky had also begun to darken. What is the Ice and Snow Goddess’s Wrath? It is storm of ice and snow.

Ice and Snow Tempest. A rank six large scale ice spell, possessing an average attack power but encompasses an extremely wide area.

Snowflakes fell from the sky, causing the atmosphere’s temperature to rapidly decline. This is the Ice and Snow Priests’ favorite environment, a dusky sky with devastatingly icy winds. The Ice and Snow Worshiper pointed his staff forward, “Forward.”

The two Ice and Snow Priests replied together at once. Their bodies enveloped with a faint blue radiance, and they took to the sky like a snowflake fluttering in the wind, floating towards the Ice God’s pagoda. The Ice and Snow Tempest best suited the Ice and Snow Priests’ short distance flights. Although they could not sustain flight like a wind mage, their short distance speed could slightly exceed that of wind mages.

His companions gone, the Ice and Snow Worshiper cast one last

icy gaze at the expansive Azure River and lightly sighed, “Everything happens because the Heavens will it. Ice Master, I will act on your behalf, but only this far.” Because of his level of magic, when Nian Bing had escaped, he could have killed him. However, the virtuous thoughts that resided in his heart did not allow him to do so, giving the pitiful, orphaned child one last final opportunity at life.

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Zha Ji walked from the peach blossom forest to the Azure River’s bank, and took a glance at the fishing net in his hands, talking to himself, “Improve, Improve my livelihood, eat my leafy greens everyday, it is always delicious, the body is always lacking nourishment. I’ll catch a few black carps and nourish this old body”

A fresh, clean and somewhat damp air breathed through his nose, making him feel exceptionally refreshed. This year Zha Ji was already fifty seven years old and lived there for ten years. Regarding the surrounding environment, there was nothing he did not know.

His two hands shook and could barely grab fishing net firmly. He raised his arms and cast the fishing net, going out just a mere four to five meters. But with regards to the fish abundant Azure river, it is said that so long as one is patient, it is impossible to return empty handed. The fishing net was fastened to his side, including a fishing line that was tied to his wrist. Zha Ji sat down and rest against the large tree besides him. It was a blazing summer, cooling off in the shade of the tree was indeed the right choice.

Just after he sat down, the fishing line attached to Zha Ji tugged unexpectedly ferociously. He opened his closed eyes and was flashed by the sun's light. "My luck couldn't possibly be this good. Ordinarily, only after waiting would you get a catch. My net's ruined, this isn't fish! Oh, my poor fishing net!" When his gaze fell upon the river, what he saw was actually a log. The log wasn't very big, only about a meter long and about as thick as a man's leg. It was twisting his rather frail fishing net. Not needing to see, he already knew that this would be the last time he used this fishing net.

However, Zha Ji hadn't lamented over his pathetic luck but discovered that on the log were a pair of two slim arms... That's a person. There's a person in the river! Daring not to be negligent, he tied the fishing line to his leg and with large strides, walked away from the river. Relying on his leg's strength, he finally brought the log with the person to shore.

"No....." Nian Bing suddenly sat up, gasping large mouthfuls of air. His eyes revealed an indefinitely bewildered expression.

Bird's chirp clearly transmitted to the center of his ear. Gentle rays of light shone on his body, producing a bit of heat. He vigorously shook his head. His mind calmed a bit. From the feeling of warmth from the sun, he knew that he still hadn't died. His heartbeat gradually stabilized. He then looked around. Apparently he was in a small wooden room. His surroundings weren't particularly decorative though the room had no lack of dust. It was obvious that the room wasn't regularly cleaned.

“You’re awake,” said an exhausted voice. The wooden door, that the tooth aching voice came from, opened and a person came in.

Nian Bing unconsciously cowered away, “Who, Who are you?”

“The person who saved your life.” Zha Ji walked to the side of the bed and took a seat, putting a bowl down at the edge of the table. With a smile he looked at Nian Bing and through to himself, a handsome child..

His brain recalled everything that had happened the past few days. Nian Bing’s body faintly jolted, unconsciously put his hand on his bosom. The solid objects were still there. That made him feel relieved. He probingly asked, “It was you, sir, that saved me?” On one hand talking, on the other sizing up the old man in front of him. He looked to be sixty years old, his black head hair graying. His wrinkles displaying many years of hardship. His face wearing an amiable smile. A very common appearance.

Naturally, Zha Ji said, “Oh course. Otherwise who else would it be? Your luck is pretty good. You were unexpectedly to be able to persist, holding onto a log. Do you know how much energy it costed me to pull you to shore? This old man was so tired, he could’ve died. Little guy, why don’t you eat something? That log of yours ran into my fishing net and ruined it. Right now, I can only give you vegetable [congee](#).”

Previously, he was frightened to the core. Nian Bing wasn’t aware of his body’s senses. Now that Zha Ji let him eat, his stomach had already fastly attached to his back. [TL Note: Means he’s really hungry.] At that time he entered the Azure river, the

pain from his body slapping the water's surface had nearly knocked him unconscious. Rushing down the river for several hundred meters, he was miraculously able to latch onto a log. His strong desire to live had not allowed him to let go of the log. No doubt his luck was good, the Azure River is extremely wide with no protruding reefs but he happened to come across Zha Ji's fishing net, saving him.

He took a somewhat cautious glance at Zha Ji. This bowl didn't have the scent of vegetable congee. When he saw the bowl's interior, he couldn't help but give it a blank stare. The white congee appeared very thick, it seemed to have a faint translucent luster. A piece of green vegetable protruded. Although wasn't evenly distributed, green vegetables were scattered within the plain white congee. It appears that he is unexpectedly capable of sensing the living flavor coming from it. It was nearly absent. The whole bowl of congee had emitted a faint, sweet scent. This caused Nian Bing not to gobble it down. How could he know? At the time, such a common bowl of vegetable congee, at the continent's culinary groups was lauded as jadeite tofu congee. By no means could any ordinary person be able to drink it. What crucial is not the ingredients, but rather the method of cooking.

Chapter 1.3 – Hunt Of The Ice And Snow Worshipper

The white congee's sweet fragrance mixed with the green vegetable's clean freshness, these two distinct flavors complemented each other perfectly. After he downed the bowl of congee, Nian Bing felt a bit of his strength recover and his spirit had very much improved. This common vegetable congee gave him such a refreshing, pleasant feeling on his lips and teeth. It's basic taste was extremely satisfying. He could not help but receive a favorable impression of Zha Ji.

“Grandpa, thank you. That congee was delicious. Did you make it?” Nian Bing asked curiously.

A sad expression flashed from Zha Ji's eyes, “Currently, I can only produce this kind of ordinary dish.”

“Ordinary? In what way? This vegetable congee is the most delicious thing I've ever ate. The taste is truly wonderful. It's... It's even better than what mother used to make, their flavors are absolutely incomparable.” Mentioning his own mother, Nian Bing's eyes couldn't help but turn red. An intense hatred emitted, Zha Ji couldn't help but be secretly fearful.

“Child, I still don't know your name, what is it? How did you fall into the water? Where is your family?”

Nian Bing's whole body became rigid. Although he is only ten years old, he had spent his entire life following his father traveling

east and west. Compared with children of the same age, he is much more mature. His father has already told him that when he meets a stranger, to only say a third of the truth. Two years ago, he accidentally revealed them, causing them experience an additional month of pursuit. After that month, he clearly understood this. Lowering his head, he said: "I think my name is Nian Bing. I don't really remember anything else."

Nian Bing was only ten years old, but in front of this old Zha Ji, how could these words possibly be convincing? However, Zha Ji didn't ask about it. Instead, he said with a faint smile: "My name is Zha Ji, you can call me Grandpa Zha. You said you've already forgotten everything. Then do you have a place to go to?"

With great difficulty, Nian Bing resisted letting his tears flow. He shook his head. "I don't know where I should go."

After seeing Nian Bing's sorrowful appearance, Zha Ji's heart couldn't endure it. "Forget about it. Child, I know you have a within your heart that you don't wish to speak of it. Grandpa won't force you. If you wish, then you can stay here for the time being. In any case, this peach blossom forest only has one resident."

Nian Bing suddenly opened his large eyes and firmly said: "No. Thank you Grandpa Zha, but I must leave. You have already saved me. I can't involve you."

Zha Ji wrinkled his eyebrows. "By saying such, there are people aiming for your life. What kind of cruel men are they? They won't even let a child as small as you get away. During your sleep, you

unceasingly shout for you father and mother. Don't tell me.... Your parents have already run into misfortune?"

No longer able to hold back his tears, Nian Bing bitterly cried, flowing down his face. Zha Ji quickly embraced him to his chest and consoled him. "It's fine now. Everything has already past. You must be frightened. This place of mine is a well-kept secret, it is a so-called forbidden area. Normal people can't come here. First you should calm down, At least wait until your body has recovered before you think about departing. Go back to sleep. At night, Grandpa will give you something good to eat." Pacified by Zha Ji, Nian Bing entered the land of dreams once more.

When the ten year old Nian Bing woke from his dream once more, he state of mind was already completely stable. Originally sunshine had entered from outside the window, but it was already dark. The birds had also returned to their nests to rest, and his surroundings have become quiet.

Sitting up from the bed, Nian Bing discovered that he was wearing a set of loose, rough, plain clothing, clearly belonging to Zha Ji. He moved his body for a bit, it seemed he was no longer very tired. He quietly opened the door and walked softly outside. His surroundings were pitch black, it was impossible to clearly see the environment around him. Night's fog filled the air, producing a bit of a chill. He unconsciously tightened his clothes. He then walked over to the illuminated room on the side. His foot had unintentionally hit something and made a sound.

"Nian Bing? Come in." Zha Ji's voice came from the room.

Nian Bing pushed the door and entered. It was simple room slightly larger than his. Looking at the bright lamp, he saw that Zha Ji had a book in his hand. When Zha Ji saw Nian Bing come in, he put his book to the side and said with a smile, “Let’s go, Grandpa will bring you to the kitchen. Everything is already prepared. Only have to warm it up.”

At this moment, Nian Bing discovered that Zha Ji had an extremely tall body, but his back was somewhat hunched. Holding Nian Bing’s narrow shoulder, Zha Ji led him to out of the room and said while walking, “In this small courtyard of mine, I was the only one that lived here. Now that you are here to keep me company, I am less lonesome. Come, see what delicious food Grandpa prepared for you.”

[TL Note: Think of a Chinese courtyard style house like [this](#), but much smaller.]

The kitchen is five meters to the side of the two bedrooms. It was an isolated room. When Nian Bing followed Zha Ji there, he was surprised to discover that the kitchen was larger than the two bedrooms combined.

Zha Ji lit an oil lamp. The long table to the side had many dishes covered by a wooden lid. The wood covers were weaved from [rattan](#). You could clearly see the green vegetables on top of the plates through the small gaps.

Zha Ji lifted the covers, revealing four plates of green vegetables. The four dishes’ appearances were all distinct. It looked as if they were created with a simple cooking technique. Zha Ji walked to the

stove's side and stopped, striking the flint. With his trembling hands, he tried to start a fire with uneven pieces of firewood. "I already finished the dishes a while ago. Unfortunately, it's gone cold. Lets warm it up. Although it's flavor lessened, it shouldn't be too much worse."

Nian Bing surprisingly discovered that Zha Ji's hands continuously trembled. Although the flint had sparked, because of Zha Ji's exceptionally unsteady hands, it was difficult to light the firewood. Nian Bing cutely hurried over, and said, "Grandpa, let me help you."

Zha Ji sighed, wearing a sad expression on his face, and handed the flint to Nian Bing. "I'm old, truly old. I should've used the oil lamp to light it. Who would've thought that man once known as the Demon Chef currently couldn't even light a fire. Everything has already become the past."

Nian Bing didn't take the flint. Neither did he pay attention to Zha Ji's words. He completely focused his spirit and softly said, "Passionate flame elements, I request of you, condense into a blazing radiance, bring warmth to this world." His voice wasn't smooth, but let out an unusual tone, a resonating tone. His small hands extended toward to stove, and a small red flame rose. Although the flame wasn't especially bright, it caught onto the stove's firewood. Once it had ignited, Nian Bing stood up.

Dumbstruck, Zha Ji looked at Nian Bing and murmured, "Magic, this is fire magic. Great Gods! Could it be you have intentionally delivered this child to my side? Thank you! Thank you! At last my wish is fulfilled, this is too great!" He cheered without rhyme or

reason, and couldn't help but look at Nian Bing a bit dazed. At this moment, it seemed as if Zha Ji's back was no longer humped, his body stood straight and tall. He excitedly cheered toward the ceiling.

“Grandpa, Grandpa Zha, what caused you to become like this?”

Zha Ji returned from above, grabbing Nian Bing's shoulders with his hands, and excitedly said, “Child, you are a mage, right? Quickly tell Grandpa that you are a fire mage.”

Nian Bing's body shook. He had just realized he had revealed that he was capable of magic on a whim. He shook his head with much force, “No, I'm not. I.. I'm not.”

“No, you are.” Zha Ji said verifying, “Child, be at ease, grandpa has not a bit of malice toward you. I am just extremely happy. You are so young but you are unexpectedly already a mage. This is a gift granted to me from the Heavens.”

Nian Bing seemed to have recalled what happened at the Ice God's Pagoda, and emotionally shouted, “No, I'm not. I'm not.”

Zha Ji realized at this moment, the somewhat rehabilitated Nian Bing had been upset by him, to a point he was somewhat unable to bear and hurriedly said, “Child, listen to me speak. First let me finish. Look at my hands.” He let go of Nian Bing, turning his hands over and showing his wrists.

Nian Bing had understood Zha Ji's words and unconsciously looked at Zha Ji's wrists. "Ah....." On Zha Ji's wrists resided a scar on top of his wrinkly veins. A deep scar about a centimeter thick. Although the cut had healed long ago, the scar is an existence that shocks the eye and astonishes the heart. The cut had left a sunken depression, leaving a dark purple. It appeared extremely frightening.

Chapter 2.1 – The Demon Chef, Zha Ji

Zha Ji bitterly laughed, “How could an old man like me with a pair ruined hand tendons possibly do to you?”

Nian Bing looked at Zha Ji, the panic in his eyes calmed a bit, and probingly asked, “Grandpa, why, why your hands like that?”

Zha Ji pulled on Nian Bing, motioning him to sit and sadly sighed, “Let Grandpa tell you a story, a story about what happened to my own body. After you finish listening, you will understand why I was so excited when I saw you use magic.” After saying this, he looked into the darkness outside beyond the door, his eyes growing hazy. ”

“In our Yang Guang Continent, we had experienced a period of war lasting three hundred years. Approximately seventy years ago, the entire continent entered a time of peace, and five great empires began to form, dividing the continent’s territories. Apart from a few special regions out of reach, all of the land have become territory of the five Great Empires. After a baptism in three hundred years of war,, the people needed to recover. These past decades, industry and agriculture had continuously developed. Although there have been disputes between the five great empires, they are considered to be at peace.”

Nian Bing nodded his head, saying, “The five great empires you mentioned were the Profound Orchid Empire in the east, the Strange Lu Empire in the southeast, the Harmonic Flower Empire in the southwest, the Bright Tree Empire in the northwest, and the Ice Moon empire in the north.

Zha Ji nodded and continued, “Correct, those are the five great empires. I was born in the Strange Lu Empire in the southeast. During my childhood, my household was very poor, and food was scarce; we often missed meals. I remember I had once asked my mother if there would ever be a time we would have enough cornbread to eat until we were full. She held me and cried. Even now I clearly remember. At the time, my greatest ambition was to be able to eat delicious delicacies every day and to be able to make the greatest dishes and let my mother eat it. Later, I had strived with great effort to diligently pursued this goal. Unfortunately, my parents had passed away from plague before I had the ability to care for them. Perhaps it were the Gods taking pity on me. When I was thirteen years old, I had met my master. At the time, because my home was poor and I was also very young, I had become an apprentice at a restaurant. It was also what I was most wanting to do. My master was the head chef at that restaurant. In order have the opportunity to learn the culinary arts that I yearned for, I had been extremely hardworking, impressing everyone in the restaurant. Our restaurant was named Qi Xiang (Wonderful Fragrance). It was the most famous restaurant in the Strange Lu Empire. My master had seen my diligence and had begun to teach me a few simple culinary arts. I could not be considered smart but I was awfully diligent. Like they say, hard work can overcome lack of talent. After three years, I had finally been promoted from an apprentice to the chef in charge of side dishes. One day, master called me out to a secluded place. He said to me, “If you want to learn the culinary arts well, then only being hard working is not enough. Comprehension is also required. Carefully observe the dishes you cook. Cooking isn’t such a simple task but rather that of profound knowledge. He taught me eight teachings for me to complete. Then I practiced cooking for ten years, ten years comprehending cooking. Those eight teachings, even today I still remember. I went through an unceasing effort to understand

them. When I was twenty three years old, my culinary arts had reached the end of its journey, but my master had passed away from illness that year. From beginning to end, I continuously kept master's eight teachings in mind. That is why I renounced the opportunity to inherit master's position at the Qi Xiang restaurant and resigned from my duties. With my kitchen knife in hand and my meager savings on my belt, I set foot on my own path. I wanted to travel all over the Yang Guang Continent and learn every region's various culinary arts."

Saying this, Zha Ji eyes were shining. It seemed that he had again returned to his glorious beginnings. Sighing, he continued, "Ten years. Another ten years. Those ten years truly had allowed me to comprehend the true essence of the culinary arts. In those ten years, I traveled to every famous restaurant, and compared our culinary arts with each and every single one of them, continuing the progress of my comprehension. Then finally, I had perfected my own style of cooking. Later, because my culinary arts had already reached the realm the Gods craftsmanship, people gave me the title, Demon Chef. In five consecutive Cooking God Competitions, I obtained five glorious victories, placing first. The dishes I cooked became an emblem of my victory. The five imperial palaces of each empire threw an olive branch towards me, hoping that I would hold the position of head chef at their imperial kitchens. However, all along I felt my own culinary arts were still insufficiently profound. As a result, I continued to explore, wishing to ascend my culinary arts to an even greater realm. Through my continuous travels, I improved. It was a wonderful experience, especially the times I created a new unique, delicious dish. The feeling of those accomplishments were unable to be compared. I dedicated my entire life to the culinary arts. Even until my forty-seventh year, I still hadn't married."

Zha Ji stopped there, and looked at Nian Bing, wholly immersed in his life's story. He gave a slight smile, saying, "Hard to imagine, huh? This ruined old man also had a glorious side."

Nian Bing gave a blank stare. Although Zha Ji spoke very ordinarily, with Nian Bing's keen senses, he became aware of the strong sorrow displayed in Grandpa Zha's voice. "Grandpa, then what about after? What happened afterwards?"

Zha Ji said with a bitter smile, "After, honestly, I truly don't want to recall anything that happened at the time but now I can't help but remember. The year I turned forty-seven was a major turning point in my life, the year I fell from the sky. Perhaps it was because I had lived forty years without experiencing such an emotion. That year, I actually fell crazily in love with a woman. She was so beautiful, so lively and cheerful. Every one of her movements, every scowl and smile, caused my heart to tremble. At the time, she was only twenty-four years old. My age was double compared to hers. Regardless, without hesitation I fell in love with her. She was also a chef but as chefs we were as different as black and white. She would only make a few refined desserts. At the time, she was a pastry chef at her restaurant. That was also the restaurant I had stayed the longest at. I thought long and hard during that time and decided to confess to her my heart's innermost feelings. Although I hadn't any great expectations she would accept then, I still wanted to speak out my heart's innermost thoughts.

Nian Bing asked, "Then did she accept?"

Zha Ji shook his head and said, "She didn't accept, neither did

she reject me. After she heard my confession of love, she raised one condition. She wanted to compare culinary arts with me. If I won, she would marry me. If I lost, I would withdraw from the culinary world and whatever reputation I possessed would become her's.

Nian Bing wrinkled his brow. His small handsome face displayed a strange expression, "Grandpa, I think you let her exploit you. She definitely knew you were the strongest chef yet she dared to raise such a condition, she certainly knew this. Besides, for her to raise such a condition, she clearly doesn't have any good intentions. Why did you sincerely wanted her to marry you?"

Zha Ji laughed, "You truly are a clever child. That's right, I let her exploit me, but at the time, my powerful emotions had already taken over my brain. I hadn't thought about it at all and readily agreed. After all, I was at the peak of the culinary world for many years, causing me to long possess an ineffable air of arrogance. At the time, I had already stopped competing in cooking competitions with other people, because nobody would be willing to challenge me. Even in the Cooking God's Competition, I have become a mere judge, nothing more. This being the case, she wanted to compete in my greatest expertise. I naturally at no reasons to refuse. Consequently, the competition that I will never forget had started."

Pausing a moment, Zha Ji then explained, "In order to convince her in heart and word, I decided to cook my six greatest signature specialties. We invited the eighteen most famous chefs in the culinary world to judge us. My culinary arts have already reached the peak of perfection. My six complex signature dishes, cooked with my hands, only took an hour to complete. Many years of culinary understanding came together, causing me to be extremely

satisfied with my own dishes. It was almost as if they were live. But strangely at the time, she had yet to make use of the ingredients in front of her. When I finished my six dishes and looked at her, she said to me, “You’ve cooked so much. I will only cook one dish, a work of art. Just that should be enough. On one side talking, the other moving. With ungraceful movement and unpracticed knife work, she simply grabbed a cutlet and tossed it into the air and chanted with a peculiar intonation. With it a blue flame soared into the air, engulfing the cutlet. A white knife light flashed in the sky. When the cutlet fell into the plate, it had turned into thirteen pieces, thirteen shining golden pieces. Until then, I hadn’t known that she was actually a mage. In addition she was also an extremely powerful fire mage. Despite this, I still believed I won. After all she only had one dish while I had six. From appearance and scent, she seemed to be at a great disadvantage. However, I quickly knew I was wrong. When I had sampled that golden cutlet, an unprecedented taste filled my mouth. Prior, that cutlet hadn’t been worked on in the slightest, neither had it been seasoned while cooking, however, her cutlet’s aroma was completely released. Thirteen pieces of cutlet, even though they weren’t sour, sweet, bitter, or spicy, any of these familiar flavors. However, every single of the thirteen pieces of cutlet, held thirteen distinct degrees of smell. These thirteen scents mixed together to produce an aroma, an aroma far more delicious than any other seasoned dish could produce. When I sampled a bit of it, I knew that I already lost. Not only was it a disastrous defeat, even from the smell, my six dishes could not possibly be compared to her cutlet. But facing her with my culinary arts, I had already fallen from my chariot. Not because of her speed, but even more significantly, because of her innovation.

Chapter 2.2 – The Demon Chef, Zha Ji

“No.” Nian Bing suddenly said, “Grandpa, you’re wrong. She did nothing more than a cheap trick. Her cutlet is the limit of what she could achieve with her magic. She could only comprehend to use it on the meat itself. Also with the distinct combustion of fire magic, it naturally resulted in its unusual flavor. If you could also use magic, then your dishes would be much better compared to hers.” Father had told him many times before, that although the magnitude of magic power is important, magic control is as equally crucial. With great magic control, you could achieve the same or even greater results with the same degree of magic power.

Zha Ji sighed and said, “That’s right. Later on, others have also told me this. However at the time, as a man, I had to accept a loss as a loss. She asked me if the wager was still valid. I said that it certainly was. That is why in front of everyone, I proclaimed my title “Demon Chef” was hers. At the same time, I used my own kitchen knife to sever my own hand tendons to express my own withdrawal from the culinary world. Then I came here. I’ve already lived here for ten years. It should now be clear why I was so excited when I saw you use magic. If I had also been able to use magic at the time, my culinary arts would have surely reached a new realm. If I had been able to use magic, perhaps she would have already become my wife. It made me remember something most profound. It was the expression on her face when I had severed my own hand tendons. It was a complicated expression. From center of her beautiful eyes, I saw regret. But it was no use. For my own honor, I had to do it in that way. No one could stop me. From that day on, the Demon Chef Zha Ji disappeared from the stage of the culinary arts and a new Demon Chef was born. Just as I was about to depart, she unexpectedly sought me out and said that was actually the only dish she could make. The only reason she

accepted my challenge was because I had once before defeated her father in the Cooking God Competition. When her father was at death's door, he still hadn't forgotten about that match and wished for her to one day have her culinary arts surpass mine. Her father's dying words caused her to continuously strive toward that goal. However, she was a mage. Before then, she couldn't cook at all. She clearly understood that to surpass me would be a near impossible feat. Therefore she chose to join the methods of magic and cooking. As a result, I lost. I lost everything. At that time she said to me, she only wanted to win honor on behalf of her father and that she hadn't wished to harm me. I smiled and told her nothing mattered anymore. Just that one emotion caused my life to have this kind of tragic end. Leaving behind those words, I departed. After a dazed period of time, I decided to settle at this quiet, uninhabited place."

Nian Bing was deeply engrossed into his tale, "Grandpa, then do you regret it?"

Zha Ji shook his head, "No. I don't regret it at all. Although I had lost everything, I can finally see culinary arts expanding in a new direction. That is to combine magic with cooking. Combined with magic, the culinary arts can ascend to a higher realm. However, it is a pity that even though I know this, it is impossible for me. Also, many people rarely attempt this. After all, as a grandiose mage, who would want to be reduced to a lowly cook?"

Nian Bing nodded and said, "I understand. You want me to learn culinary arts from you, fuse my magic with the culinary arts, and become a magic chef, right?"

Zha Ji's sorrowful mood vanished and he smiled benevolently. "Then, are you willing?"

Nian Bing lowered his head. At this moment, his eyes continuously flickered through various complicated expressions. He truly thought too much for the conduct of a ten year old child. However, Zha Ji couldn't see his current expression. Quickly, Nian Bing decided. He lifted his head and looked at Zha Ji, "Grandpa, I am sorry. I cannot."

Zha Ji had a faint light in his eyes, but it quickly disappeared. "En, Grandpa cannot force you. Now you've already heard Grandpa's story. Could you let Grandpa hear yours? You were carried here with the river's flow. How did that come to be?"

Nian Bing hesitate for a moment and said, "Grandpa, you saved my life. I really shouldn't conceal this from you again. My father and mother were both mages. We were originally a happy family. However, not long ago, when we passed through the Bing Yue Empire's region called something.... Jagged Pagoda Mountain, we came across many bandits. They wanted to loot our belongings but father and mother did not allow them to. They raised their hands at once. You would know that although mages possess their own abilities, they are at their greatest disadvantage when they are chanting spells. Although father and mother had destroyed a few enemies, but finally... they had finally...." Saying this, Nian Bing bitterly wept.

Normally, Zha Ji would have certainly realized that Nian Bing's crying was secretly targeted at him. However, he had just finished narrating his life's story and his mind was still immersed in the

memory of that competition. In addition, the day had darkened. Therefore, he could not take note of these small details.

Nian Bing's lie did include pieces of truth. At the time, when he followed his father through Jagged Pagoda mountain, they did come across many bandits that tried to rob them. However, his father's magical prowess handled those bandits extremely easily. Jagged Pagoda Mountain is a famous bandit lair. Because of this reason, Zha Ji was already convinced of Nian Bing's words. After all, how could a kind old man be wary of a child of only ten years?

“The Ice Moon Empire always had the Ice God's Pagoda to protect it. I truly don't know what those Ice God Pagoda Priests are doing. Jagged Pagoda Mountain could not become so evil within one or two days. They should have thoroughly exterminated those bandits earlier. Child, don't be so heart-broken. Even if you do not wish to follow Grandfather and learn culinary arts, I will say it again, you can live here with peace of mind. Is that alright?”

he current Nian Bing was homeless, so he could only softly nod his head. His young mind was full of hatred towards the Ice God's Pagoda. Ice God's Pagoda, one day I shall return.

Zha Ji picked up a cup of water from the side, his hand trembling. Because he turned his back to Nian Bing, Nian Bing did not discover that some fine white powder had entered the water during the trembling. He handed over the water to Nian Bing. “Child, Why don't you first drink some water? Grandpa will warm up some dishes for you.

Without any doubts, Nian Bing opened his mouth wide and

drank cup of water.

Zha Ji's expression was somewhat complicated. In his mind he seemed to be struggling about something. However, he had quickly decided and made up his mind.

After drinking the water, Nian Bing cutely placed the cup on the side before stretching his body. "Grandpa, how come you haven't warmed up your food? Your food will definitely be delicious!"

Zha Ji sighed and said, "Forgive me, Nian Bing. Grandpa has no other alternative. You are my sole opportunity.

Nian Bing was shocked. He suddenly felt a spell of dizziness come over his body in a flash.

Zha Ji raised his head and looked at Nian Bing. His voiced deepened, "Look at me, Child. Look at my eyes. Right now you are tired, very tired. Relax your body. Relax everything. I am the person whom you trust most. Sleep. Sleep..."

Nian Bing gazed into Zha Ji's eyes as his expression gradually became dull. Although his body was the same as before, he no longer wore an expression.

Chapter 2.3 – The Demon Chef, Zha Ji

Zha Ji bit through his own fingers and drew a circle in the air, “Have my blood guide the way. Seal, Endless Hatred.” A red light flashed, enveloping Nian Bing’s body. He faintly shivered, then returned to serenity.

Zha Ji continued, saying, “Nian Bing, I am named Zha Ji. I am your teacher. From now on, apart from your knowledge of understanding, the continent, and magic, you will forget all else. Whatever happened before now, let it become nothing. Currently, the only attachment in your mind is the cultivation of both magic and culinary arts, pursuing the pinnacle of culinary arts. That is your life’s greatest objective.”

Saying this, Zha Ji paused. Nian Bing then repeated, murmuring Zha Ji’s previous sentences. His lifeless gaze becoming more and more engrossed.

Zha Ji’s eyes displayed a trace of inner-turmoil and continued, “Unless your magic reaches a level powerful enough to annihilate your enemies, your memories will forever be sealed, unable to awaken. Sleep, Child. Sleep well.” While saying this, Zha Ji embraced Nian Bing into his chest. Nian Bing closed his eyes. His hurried breathes became normal.

Holding Nian Bing, Zha Ji sighed, “I hadn’t expected that I would exchange a meal for the first use of the hypnosis seal, and to go as far as to use it on a child. Nian Bing, forgive me. Grandpa had no alternative. If you aren’t willing to follow me and learn my culinary arts, I fear that all I have learned will be lost. I hope you

can understand Grandpa's painstaking efforts. Grandpa will certainly teach you with his heart and soul and turn you into the greatest chef of all. Perhaps in the future there will be a day when your memories will awaken. At that time, even if you hate me, I am willing to bear it. You cannot be the previous me. You cannot become the Demon Chef, but rather a magic chef. As a chef that can use magic, you will surpass all those that have preceded you and reach the true pinnacle of the culinary arts. Perhaps I am too selfish, but if your father and mother were alive, they definitely would not have blamed me. Rather than let hate forever live inside you, is it not better if you happily pursued the culinary arts?"

As Zha Ji murmured, talking to himself, he did not discover that when he said those last words, a trace of red light from Nian Bing's drooping right hand quietly died away.

Holding his body, Zha Ji carried Nian Bing to his room and tucked him in well. Zha Ji smiled, "At last, my wishes draws closer. There is no way I could possibly renounce the favor that the Heavens have granted me. Child, sleep well. From tomorrow on, you will learn the Demon Chef's skills. Haha, Hahaha!" Zha Ji's attachment to the kitchen arts caused him to forget all else. In these past ten years, nothing else had made him feel happier than he felt now.

Zha Ji closed the door and left. Perhaps he would not be able to sleep soundly today.

The wooden room became tranquil once more. Everything became entrenched in a concentrated darkness. Nian Bing who should have originally been fast asleep, suddenly sat up, his blue

eyes revealed a faint light. It was not a dull expression. He appeared to be thinking deeply about something.

He held his hand to his bosom and took out two stones from within , one blue and one red. The red stone was carved in the shape of a flame. The blue stone shaped as a rhombus. Each of the two stones emitted rays of light in their color. The red and blue blades of light although weak, were separated from each other as if they were mutually repelling one another.

“Mother, thank you. If the Ice and Snow Goddess’s Stone hadn’t protected my spirit all along, perhaps I would’ve already lost my memories. Mother, can you tell me? What should Nian Bing do now? Do you want me to do as Zha Ji said and abandon all of my hate? No, it is impossible for me. Those people killed mother and father in such a painful way. I.... I....”

In each hand, he gripped the red and blue stones tightly. From the palms of his hands, scorching hot fire elements and freezing cold ice elements intruded into his body. While the fire and ice gathered cultivated an extreme amount of energy, Nian Bing did not feel unwell at all. He was pondering, continuously pondering. On the Yang Guang Continent, no matter in which of the five great empires. Mage classes are all the same. From low to high, elementary mage, intermediate mage, advanced mage, great mage, magic scholar, magister, and Divine Descendant. Currently he was but a mere elementary mage. The reason why the the Ice God Pagoda can protect the entire Ice Moon Empire, is because it possesses the strongest of mages, Divine Descendants. With Father’s ability as a magic scholar, when faced against a Divine Descendant, he was unable to withstand a single blow. Even if his hatred grew once more, would there even be any use?

[TL Note: (神降师) Divine Descendant, means a descended god, not the offspring of a god.]

Nian Bing's mind was somewhat cold. With regards to what magic cultivators have said, Divine Descendants were an unobtainable summit. You cannot reach such a realm through pure cultivation. It requires comprehension and destiny's favor. You must also be supported by the experience of an innumerable amount of expert battles, go through many years of diligent training, and become one with heaven and earth. Only then would it become possible to become a descended god. In the entire continent there is only one Divine Descendant that does not belong to the Ice God Pagoda. It is said that there are two more, but it is only speculation for no one has confirmed their existence. The Ice Moon Empire in their area of the Yang Guang Continent possessed a tremendous position. Relying on oneself's meager power, how could one possibly contend against a Divine Descendant? It would undoubtedly be courting death. Grandpa Zha Ji was right. Unless my magic reaches a level such that I can annihilate my foes, wouldn't my hatred have no meaning? Perhaps I should have my own hatred sealed. When we had faced the Ice God's Pagoda, my father had said before, do not blind your reason with hate, only then would it be possible to rescue your mother. I will also do as such. Temporarily let go of your hatred, and perhaps it is in the future you will best be able to seize your revenge.

Thinking of it here, Nian Bing heart suddenly became clear. His eyes displayed a faint happiness and said to himself, "Grandpa Zha Ji, although you haven't sealed my innermost hatred, Nian Bing will seal it himself. I will wait until the day I am able to contend with a Divine Descendant. Then I will bear the name father bestowed upon me. Father, Mother, Are you happy that Nian Bing

is letting go of his hatred? Be at ease. One day... One day I will inevitably seize justice on your behalf.”

He tightly grasped his fists. The Ice and Snow Goddess’s Stone and the Flame God’s Stone deeply dug into his skin, immersing itself with Nian Bing’s resolve until they could no longer be seen. Just then, the surrounding ice and fire elements conducted a wonderful interaction with his body. He then lied flat down on the bed and began his essential daily meditation. Father had once said to me, there are no shortcuts in the cultivation of magic. Only through the means of continuous meditation, continuous interaction with magic elements can you gradually increase the strength of your magic power. In order to use magic power your own attributes must resonate with the identical magic elements. Through the use of an incantation, you could discharge even stronger magic.

Before, Nian Bing had only cultivated fire magic. But at the start of events at that mountain peak, his mother staked it all and used all her strength to give him something, that is the Ice and Snow Goddess’s stone in his hand. After he possessed this stone, he was surprised to discover that a portion of the fire magic power within his body had unexpectedly changed into ice magic power. Observing the status of his body, the magic power within had divided into two completely separate sides. At the center of his body, a gap separated either side, appearing extremely strange. That was why at such a critical moment, he was able cast elementary magic .

Today was the first time he had used both stones to cultivate. Eyes closed, Nian Bing called out to the magic elements in the air. Inside his body, a blue half and a red half emerged. The magic fire

element absorbed into his body naturally melted into the right half of his body, and the absorbed magic ice elements floated toward the left half of his body. Aside from his head, a line of red and blue color divided through the center of Nian Bing's body, each side existing harmoniously without conflict.

At this moment, Nian Bing was able to still his mind and reflect upon the situation of his current magic. He could not help but become baffled at the state of his interior body. When he was taught magic in the past by his father, Rong Tian, he was told that as a mage it was best to cultivate only one type of magic. If you do this, it was possible to reach the pinnacle of magic. If you were to scatter your cultivation with many types of magic, it would undoubtedly cause your spiritual power to scatter as well, causing it to become extremely difficult to improve. In addition, of the seven known magic types, there are two opposing types. They are ice and fire, light and dark. Ice and water are considered one type of magic. Ice and water magic are variations of each other. Ice and Fire are complete opposites. No one has been able to simultaneously possess these two extreme magics. If one cultivates them simultaneously, it is possible to cause harm to one's self as they would struggle to overturn each other. When Nian Bing had began to learn magic, Rong Tian had him choose which type of magic to study. Because Nian Bing's body could already receive fire and ice elements, Nian Bing chose the one easier to begin, fire magic. Following Rong Tian, he continuously cultivated. However, his body's ice compatibility hadn't disappeared. Rong Tian believed that after Nian Bing's fire magic reaches a certain level his ice compatible physique could be ignored. That is why it had not been given much attention. However, he hadn't been aware that every time that Nian Bing meditated, Nian Bing's ice compatible physique had secretly influenced him.

Chapter 3.1 – A Chef's Cultivation

Perhaps if Nian Bing continuously cultivated fire magic and entered the realm of intermediate mages, his ice compatible physique might have disappeared as a result of his overpowering fire element. However at this time, Nian Bing had obtained the Ice and Snow Goddess's Stone. As a first rate precious magic stone, the Ice and Snow Goddess's Stone produces breaths of the purest ice element. Wordlessly, it had slowly drawn towards Nian Bing's ice physique. What was originally fire magic power was forced to separate into different halves of his body. Originally, Nian Bing's cultivated fire magic power was not pure, continuously suffering from the influence of his ice physique. When the Ice and Snow Goddess's Stone had appeared, the fire magic power within Nian Bing's body happened to be influenced by it, causing the strengthened ice element to separate from his fire magic power. As a result, regardless of whether it was his ice or fire magic power, they were each separate and extremely pure.

At the age of five, Nian Bing had begun to cultivate magic. Now, five years had past. The number of mages on the Yang Guang Continent were exceedingly rare; this was because the cultivation of a mage was extremely difficult. If a martial practitioner were to informally practice for three years, there would be some degree of achievement. At least they'd be able to attain the level of "Initial Success". But for a mage without a foundation of ten years of meditation, it would be fundamentally impossible to attain the level of an intermediate mage. Even if an intermediate mage were to battle a martial practitioner that had cultivated only three years, the amount of time needed chant is a most terrible disadvantage. That is why those who choose to cultivate magic are very few. Also, those that succeed in joining with the magic elements are even rarer than those that become intermediate

magicians. However, magicians are an essential existence. Although they would be at a disadvantage in a duel, in a battle on the scale of a legion, they are absolutely essential, especially those advanced magicians that are capable of casting lethal large area spells. They often transformed an entire battle's situation. That is why even if magic is truly difficult to cultivate, that is all along they had justification for their existence.

Last year, Nian Bing had succeeded in becoming an elementary magician. Although it seemed to Rong Tian that this was quite fast, he did not know that Nian Bing's magic talent was actually extraordinarily outstanding. Were it not for the influence of his ice physique, his progress would have been much faster. But at this moment, under the effects of both the Ice and Snow Goddess's Stone and the Blazing Flame God's Stone, the disadvantage that existed for many years had finally disappeared. Because he was only a elementary magician, regardless of whether it was fire element or water element, neither of them would be very strong. Therefore for the time being, he was able to achieve equilibrium within his body. Although his previous disadvantage had disappeared, a new problem had arose. Ice and fire subdued one another. Nian Bing continued to ponder as such. What kind of situation would occur? Could they continuously exist in harmony? Nian Bing did not know the answer. He also did not know what he should do. It is true that the cultivation of magic is quite difficult. But to think of abandoning a type of magic power within his body was even more difficult. Unless he were to receive the assistance of a magician three ranks higher than his own, he would fundamentally be unable to succeed. But at this moment, where would he go to look for a magician?

Lying flat on the bed, Nian Bing continued to ponder about these questions. The left, cold, the right, warm gave the feeling of

unease. However, it hadn't made him feel excessively unwell. What should I do? Continue this kind of meditation? Ice and Fire, these two types of magic power, although they were not much, they felt purely concentrated. Perhaps this was the effect of the two precious stones. Right now, I have no other methods. In order to take revenge, I must have formidable strength. This being the case, I cannot give up cultivating magic, I can only continue. Perhaps if I tread carefully and wait until my magic grows stronger, I could have a way to settle this. Thinking of this, Nian Bing no longer hesitated. Finally after he had begun to separate the fire and ice living his body, he had meditated for the first time. Fire and Ice, these two magic elements, with the aid of the two precious stones, quickly condensed into his body at an amazing speed. Quickly, he fell into a trance.

Early morning, songbird's chirpings were flooding the entire peach forest. The whole night Zha Ji was unable to sleep. He had risen from bed much earlier.

"Sleepyhead, it's time to wake up." Zha Ji opened the room's door.

Nian Bing had just awoken from meditation not long after. It was just that his whole body felt unusually pure and his energy invigorated. With such an unprecedentedly snug feeling he could not help but let out a moan. He unconsciously stretched his body. Of course, within this snug feeling, there was a strange phenomenon. The already distinct temperatures on either side of his body had grown even farther apart.

Seeing Zha Ji, Nian Bing faintly smiled and said, "Master (Shi Fu

師傅), you woke up so early!”

Originally, Zha Ji was still afraid that his hypnosis had failed, but having heard Nian Bing call him these two words, Shi Fu (Master), he let out a sigh of relief. With a slight smile, he said, “Early? It’s not early. Quickly get up. From today onward, Master will formally start to pass on his culinary arts to you.”

“Alright.” Nian Bing saw that Zha Ji hadn’t suspected him and quickly got up. Taking advantage of Zha Ji’s inattention, he carefully put away the two precious stones. He simply arranged his room and followed Zha Ji out.

“Master, from where do I start learning?” Nian Bing curiously asked. Because he had resolved the matter of his hatred, he currently appeared much more lively than the day before.

With a slight smile, Zha Ji said, “I had thought much about it yesterday, the schedule of what I will teach you everyday. So long as you follow this schedule, you will be fine. Nian Bing, you will become a great chef. Do you know what is the first thing you should experience?”

Nian Bing puzzling shook his head, “I haven’t learned this before. How would I know?”

Zha Ji sternly said, “In order to become a good chef, you must go through a process; The process of becoming familiar with food. Only after becoming completely familiar with all of food’s various flavors and understanding how to taste, will you be able to become

a qualified chef. Therefore starting today, you will taste all of my dishes. Let us temper your sense of taste and smell.”

Nian Bing stared blankly for a second and intelligently, he quickly replied, “Master, you don’t mean that you’ll just have me eat everyday? How could I learn the culinary arts like that?”

Zha Ji chuckled and said, “The culinary arts is a craft. Eating is also equivalent to a craft. You think eating is such an easy task? Not only must you eat, but you also know from which ingredient the taste comes from. You must also tell me all of what you’ve eaten.”

Nian Bing smiled and clapped his hands, saying, “Alright! That is rather complicated. Then when will we start eating? Master, I am already hungry.” Because of the hypnosis yesterday evening, apart from the bowl of congee he had initially eaten, he hadn’t eaten anything else. How could he not be hungry?

Zha Ji said unhappily, “Is it really that simple? Later you will know whether or not eating is simple. After eating, you need to go through two processes. After completing these two processes, you will be able to genuinely being learning the culinary arts.”

Nian Bing curiously asked, “Two of what processes?”

Zha Ji strangely smiled, saying, “These two processes, is to become fat from thinness. Then to become thin from fatness.”

Although Nian Bing was intelligent, he still hadn't understood Zha Ji's meaning. Looking at his puzzled expression, Zha Ji said, "You still don't understand? While we gradually advance through these processes, you will know the reasons for these two stages. Fine, begin the first meal. I have already readied breakfast for you. Go to the kitchen by yourself."

Breakfast was rather simple, a large bowl of congee and a few small side dishes. Nian Bing was already hungry. Along with the fact it was Zha Ji's handiwork, Nian Bing had nearly swallowed it all in one gulp. With his fastest speed, this breakfast had come to a close.

Zha Ji sitting at Nian Bing's side, saw that he had finished eating, pleased with himself, and he asked with a smile, "How was it?"

Nian Bing contently said, "It was very delicious. Master, you are truly worthy of the title, Demon Chef. The food you produce is incomparable."

Zha Ji sighed and said, "It is a pity that my hand tendons have already been cut. I can only make the most simplest of dishes. En, Incorrect. Smelly brat. Did you think a sentence of how good it was would satisfy me? Did you forget what I had just told you before? You have to now tell me what you felt from this breakfast."

Nian Bing looked Zha Ji with [innocent eyes](#), "Felt? Is delicious not a feeling? Don't tell me that this isn't enough!?"

Zha Ji hit Nian Bing on the head, "Fool. Of course it's not

enough. You only knew that it was delicious. Is there any difference between you and an average person? You have to say what was in it! Only that is acceptable.”

Chapter 3.2 – A Chef’s Cultivation

Nian Bing said, “Why didn’t you say that earlier? You hadn’t said it clearly, how could you blame me? I’ve finished eating. I’m going to go out and exercise.”

Zha Ji helplessly said, “This time I will forgive you as I hadn’t given you an explanation. If you give another reply like that at noon, you won’t get an evening meal. You should go exercise now. Take that axe and go chop some firewood.”

Nian Bing looked in the direction Zha Ji’s finger pointed. He only saw a large axe in the corner with a handle nearly as tall as himself. The blade of the axe was about a Chi (a third of a meter) in length. Although it appeared to be somewhat rusted, he could still sense it’s sharpness. He nodded his head and said, “Master, I am going now. How much firewood do we need before I return?”

Zha Ji stared blankly. He had originally believed that Nian Bing would have surely complained once he saw that huge axe, but he hadn’t expected him to readily agree. He unconsciously asked, “Don’t you think this axe is too big?”

Nian Bing helplessly said, “I still have to go and chop wood even if it’s big! Now that you have me, just leave all the heavy manual work to me. It must be inconvenient with your hands. Rest well. Maybe your hand tendons will grow back in the future.” Saying this, he walked over to the large hatchet.

Hearing Nian Bing’s words, Zha Ji’s chest expanded as it once

again felt as if something was residing in the center of his chest. His heart fluttered as a warmth that had been absent for many years reappeared.

The axe truly was heavy; he was barely able to drag it over using both his hands. Using such a heavy axe to chop wood could not be considered convenient.

Zha Ji said, “Nian Bing, you only have to chop a little firewood before returning, just enough for our livelihood. What I need you to do is to use that axe to split and chop the logs, nice and slender. To become a chef, one must have a robust body. At the same time, your knife handling must become reliable and steadfast through practice. Do you understand?”

Nian Bing nodded his head in understanding as he smiled and dragged the large axe outside.

“Wait a moment.” Zha Ji couldn’t help but break into a cold sweat when he discovered he had forgotten the most important matter. The Heavens have sent me such a great disciple with much difficulty. Even a hundred deaths could not redeem Zha Ji if Nian Bing lost his life because of his carelessness.

Walking out of the room, Nian Bing turned his head to look at Zha Ji, “Master, do you have something else?”

Zha Ji patted his stomach and said, “I have truly gone senile. You have just arrived and I forgot to introduce you to the state of affairs around here. This forest is called the Peach Blossom Forest

because over seventy percent of the trees growing here are peach trees.

Nian Bing thought to himself, ‘Isn’t this nonsense? There aren’t any peach trees, so why would you call it Peach Blossom Forest?’ and asked, “How is it like that?”

[TL Note: Nian Bing doesn’t recognize those trees as peach trees.]

Zha Ji said, “The majority of peach blossoms here are a different kind. Do you know why there are no people here? That is because these kind of peach blossoms can secrete a type of poison that spreads through the wind. I named it Peach Blossom Miasma as its toxicity is absolutely fierce. If people or animals inhale it, they would immediately convulse and die. That is why this is one of the Ice Moon Empire’s forbidden areas. Not many creatures can live here apart from the few animals that possess an innate resistance. People definitely won’t come here. Therefore, you do not need to be afraid of any pursuit. ”

Nian Bing stared blankly for a moment, then said, “If the Peach Blossom Miasma is so poisonous, then why aren’t you affected?”

Zha Ji chuckled and said, “Did you already forget who your teacher is? I am a chef. There is no one who is sharper than me concerning everything that can be eaten. Although the Peach Blossom Miasma here is poisonous, it’s not like there aren’t any means to restrain it. There will always be something nearby to subdue anything extremely poisonous. In this forest there is a type of five leaf clover; you can use it to make a medicinal powder. After taking it, your body will be able to resist the peach blossom

miasma; it would no longer have an effect you. Here, eat this and continue to do so for the next three months, and your body will naturally become immune. In the future you won't have to worry about it." Saying this, Zha Ji handed over a small porcelain bottle to Nian Bing.

The medicinal powder created from the five leaf clover tasted sharply bitter. After Nian Bing put it in his mouth, he nearly spat it out. With great difficulty he completely swallowed it down. Then he continued, dragging the axe towards the forest.

Walking into the Peach Blossom Forest, Nian Bing observed the surrounding environment. The air here was exceptionally fresh and clean and had the faint aroma of peach blossoms. The air was also very moist. This place should be beside the Azure River. There was only a small gap between each of the peach trees. Although Nian Bing wasn't tall, he still had to be careful while walking as he definitely didn't want to run into a peach tree.

The peach trees weren't tall. Even after a decade, peach trees would remain the same. Nian Bing chopped at the leafy branches for firewood. Compared with common tall trees, these peach trees were much easier. However, Nian Bing was currently facing a problem. Even if those peach trees were short, he would still have to lift the axe. How could he pick up such a heavy axe like an adult at his young age?

Nian Bing had only managed to wear himself out and felt somewhat embarrassed facing the peach tree in front of him. He tried to chop at the branches several times, but all he could do was lift the axe a little from the ground. Strength was not a mage's

strong suit.

“If I can condense a blade of ice, maybe I can cut down the branches.” Nian Bing said to himself. However, although he possessed ice magic power, he had never practiced any ice magic incantations before. That’s why he didn’t have any suitable incantations. Even though he had magic power, he couldn’t do anything with it. Could it be that he had to use fire magic to burn it down? He had long been familiar with fire magic incantations and knew all the incantations from ranks one through eight. But that was useless, unless he wanted to burn the whole peach tree down.

This axe was truly too heavy for a child of only ten years. Nian Bing, whose mind far exceeded those of his own age, sat pondering against a peach tree. Break a few branches and bring them back? No, he couldn’t even chop firewood. Only after chopping a few branches could he return. But he couldn’t even lift the axe, how would he cut them down?

Suddenly, Nian Bing was struck by a bright idea. Although he couldn’t use ice magic, there was a kind of flame blade technique in rank two fire magic. Condensing fire elements, one could create a long, beautiful blade of flame. The flame blade’s attack potential was most concentrated at the blade’s edge. If used to chop wood, not only would the result be no good, but it would easily cause a wildfire. It’d be troublesome if the Peach Blossom Forest were to catch on fire. However, if this flame blade’s incantation were to be altered, fire would become ice. He didn’t know whether or not he could do it as his magic power was barely enough to use a few rank two spells. But he could give it a try, after all there was nothing to lose.

Nian Bing jumped up from the ground and threw the axe to the side without care. He took out his treasured Ice and Snow Goddess's Stone from his bosom. With a slight smile, he pinched the stone with his thumb and forefinger and held it above his head. Concentrating, he chanted, "Ice elements, I request of you, condense into a large, sharp blade edge, and chop through the world's bindings and chains." The tone and intonation were completely similar to that of the execution of flame blade. He clearly felt the surrounding ice elements rapidly condense toward him, continuously resonating with the ice magic power within the left side of his body. A near transparent ice blade of exactly one Chi (a third of a meter) in length appeared in the air. Nian Bing exulted in his mind, knowing that he succeeded. He pointed his finger toward a large branch and said, "Go."

The ice blade threw itself forward at his command. A ray of light flashed as the blade chopped at the branch, producing a fragment. The ice blade's might was quite limited as his magic power was still not strong enough. Nian Bing was very excited nevertheless. He knew he had found a shortcut at last. Perhaps advanced spells possessed their own unique incantations; but the chants to elementary spells should mostly be the same. The ice blade had chopped a third of the way through the branch. Running to the branch while relinquishing control of the ice blade, he grabbed the branch with both hands and used all his strength to pull it down.

The branch snapped off jaggedly after he dragged it down, it wasn't made of metal after all.

While continuously using the same method, Nian Bing soon surprisingly discovered that his ice magic power had exceeded his previous fire magic power by quite a bit. He obtained seven more

thick branches after using seven ice blades in succession and his ice magic power was neatly consumed.

Chapter 3.3 – A Chef's Cultivation

The use of magic had left his spirit somewhat exhausted. He leaned against a tree and briefly meditated.

The Ice and Snow Goddess's stone is truly worthy of being called the highest quality ice gem. After one short hour, it had helped him recover his small amount of magic power. Yesterday's meditation and today's recovery caused his magic to have a slight improvement.

Zha Ji had just finished making lunch a moment ago and stood in front of the wooden room moving his stiff body. He was baffled. Why would Nian Bing take such a long time to come back? Could it be he could actually use that axe to chop wood? That's impossible. When he had Nian Bing take the axe, he had only wanted to see how long it would take for Nian Bing to come back. He had wanted to confirm how long Nian Bing would ponder about how to chop wood. For the longer he pondered, the more thoughtful he was, and also the greater understanding of dishes he would have as a chef. This was a simple test that Zha Ji gave Nian Bing, but it had already been two hours. The sun had long since reached the center of the sky. This caused Zha Ji to feel somewhat worried.

Just as Zha Ji was about to go out and look for Nian Bing, a crisp voice sounded out, "Master, I'm back. Look, is this enough firewood?"

Nian Bing came back from the Peach Blossom Forest with his brow beaded with sweat. He dragged back seven or eight peach branches that were tied to his large axe with a vine. The weight

was clearly no small burden for him. He appeared to lack breath as he spoke.

“You actually chopped firewood? Could it be that you can actually lift that axe?” Zha Ji said, surprised.

With his small face red, Nian Bing said, “No, I used magic. That is how I chopped these. However my magic relatively weak. After I finished chopping wood, I needed to recover my magic power. Then when I next looked at the sky, it was already noon. That’s why I’ve returned for now. In the afternoon, I’ll go get more.”

Zha Ji’s heart stirred, “You used what magic? You can use fire magic to chop wood? You don’t want to burn this place down, right?”

“Of course I didn’t. I used Ice Blade to chop it down, look! Ice Elements, I request of you, condense into a large, sharp blade, and chop through the world’s bindings and chains!” With a flash of light, a transparent blade of ice appeared before him.

“You know two types of magic!?” Zha Ji’s eyes had nearly shot out light. He wasn’t a mage. Naturally, he didn’t know that ice magic and fire magic were unable to be cultivated together. He could only think about how lucky he was to pick up such a treasure. “Ice. Very good. You can also use ice in dishes. It seems that I’m going to have to change the way I teach you. If you can put both fire and ice to use, then the dishes you put out will..... Alright, let’s go. We’ll go eat first.”

The meal could not be considered lavish; it only consisted of two dishes and ordinary rice. However these dishes were made from Zha Ji's hands, how could they possibly be lacking? To Nian Bing, this meal tasted even more luscious. In all of his years he had been wandering around the continent with his father, this was the first time he had eaten so steadily. He satisfied his stomach, causing his small face to appear flushed.

"How was it? What do you feel?" Seeing Nian Bing finish eating, Zha Ji hastily asked.

"Delicious, it was truly delicious," Nian Bing said from the bottom of his heart.

Zha Ji looked at him, dumbstruck, "This again?"

"Wa, I had forgotten. It might be because I had just used magic to chop firewood; my mental strength was exhausted. Master, at night I will definitely remember."

Zha Ji speechlessly looked at Nian Bing, and nearly burst into rage. He groaned and said, "This time I will forgive you, but there will be no third time!"

Nian Bing chuckled and said, "Master, don't be angry. Actually, this time I did feel it. Although I didn't know what these two dishes were, they tasted fresh and salty. In addition, it left a sweet, fragrant aftertaste. It was crisp and felt very nice. Furthermore, when it reached the stomach, it felt nice and warm."

Zha Ji unhappily said, “That’s it? I used half a day’s worth of effort for nothing. Do you know why these dishes taste good? When ordinary people cook vegetables, first, they put only oil into the pan. After the oil is hot, they put in green onions and cover the pan. Then, they put in the vegetables and stir-fry. Lastly, they add the seasoning. The first reason why my stir-fry is delicious, is because of the ingredients. They are the freshest vegetables. Right after they are picked from the forest, they go straight to the pan. Secondly, I do not use oil. This is the reason why you don’t notice any oiliness. If ordinary people don’t use oil, they wouldn’t have a method to stir-fry. However, I can use water instead because I’ve added special ingredients in the water, among these are a few medicinal ingredients. After they are mixed, not only does the water cause the vegetables to not stick to the pan, but also causes them to become more fragrant and sweet. Simultaneously, while stir-frying, heat control is crucial. Often a mere second of error will cause the flavor to become entirely different. You must remember, no matter what the food it is, if you want it to be delicious, you must bring out its natural flavor. Do you understand?”

Nian Bing was at a loss, and said, “Teacher, isn’t it too early to teach me this? We should take it step by step.”

Zha Ji said, “I simply wanted you to first know this. Tasty dishes have reason for their deliciousness. Alright, go take a nap. In the afternoon, you will resume chopping firewood. At the kitchen’s left corner there is a wood knife. That is what you can use. In the future, you cannot use magic to chop wood. Understand? That would be a complete waste. You must use magic during cooking’s most crucial point in order to reflect its true worth. If I knew magic, my cooking would be much greater!”

[TL Note: Wood knife is a machete like cleaver.]

From the start of the day, Nian Bing lived an orderly life. Every morning, he would wake up early. First, he would simply tidy up his bedroom the kitchen. Then, he would eat breakfast and listen to Zha Ji's lecture on a few aspects of the culinary arts. Zha Ji was not impatiently teaching him by having him learn from practice, but carefully teaching him the knowledge every chef should know. After this, he would go chop firewood. Chopping down firewood was not at all difficult. What was difficult was splitting it. As Zha Ji had instructed Nian Bing, splitting logs requires paying attention to the grain¹ of the wood. Each piece of wood's grain differed, as does the location to split it in two. To evenly split firewood was no easy task. Lunch was the same as breakfast. In addition to him telling Zha Ji what he had perceived from the meal, he heard Zha Ji talk about it. In the afternoon it was the same as in the morning, chopping firewood. What Zha Ji required of him was not the quantity of firewood split, but rather how thin the firewood was split. The thinner, the better. After dinner, Nian Bing would listen to Zha Ji's lecture, and return to his room to meditate. Meditation is not only the best method to cultivate magic power, but also the best way to sleep.

Many days had passed. Nian Bing had finally experienced the process of becoming fat from thinness. Although he continuously split firewood everyday, the amount of exercise he received was not at all large. In addition, Zha Ji changed the meals he gave Nian Bing. In every meal he added a bit of Huang Jing², ginseng and other herbs he picked from the forest. It was as if Nian Bing's body was pumped with air. With the horizontal growth of Nian Bing's originally thin body, it is only natural that with his plentiful nutrition that his stature also grew much taller. But compared to

his body weight, his height wasn't very proportional.

After a year had passed, the originally handsome child had disappeared. Regardless of where you looked, Nian Bing's body resembled that of a sphere. When he asked Zha Ji whether or not he had become too fat, Zha Ji simply told him that later he will certainly return to thin.

“Master, today do I still have to split firewood? The firewood I chop is already very thin!” Nian Bing ran to Zha Ji's room and said somewhat discontentedly.

“Chop, continue chopping. You are still far too lacking.” Zha Ji didn't look at him as he lied on the bed and turned over. Ever since Nian Bing came, he had become much more lax, not having to be concerned with any of the heavy labor. Only cooking three meals everyday for Nian Bing is enough.

“But Master, how do I have to chop to be finished!?” Chopping firewood everyday for a whole year, who wouldn't be sick of it?

“Finished? That's simple! Currently, you truly chop wood thin enough, but they are not even. When you can chop firewood into even pieces, you will be finished.” Without the slightest bit of urgency, Zha Ji smacked his lips twice and went back to sleep.

Even, this word made Nian Bing recall of the magic power within his body. With the assistance of the Ice and Snow Goddess's Stone and the Flame God's Stone, this past year his magic had improved at an extremely rapid speed. Now he had understood why his

father could become a magic scholar when he was only thirty-seven years old. Perhaps the reason was because of the Flame God's Stone. However, the problem was facing him all the same. When he had first started, he had simply relied on his surface perceptions, feeling half of his body cool and the other half warm. But now, either side of his body had clearly distinct temperatures. Whenever he dips the left side of his body in water, it becomes ice water. The right side of his body was hot as if under a fever. One side cold, one side hot. It frequently made Nian Bing feel dizzy, especially when he used magic. Whenever he unbalanced his magic power, this feeling became ever more distinct. Therefore, after he uses a water spell, he must cast a fire spell that uses the same amount of magic power, otherwise he would suffer from the imbalance.

Nian Bing didn't tell Zha Ji about this. To take revenge, he clearly understood he would put himself in danger. But he still had to correctly look after his cultivation. He believed so long as his own magic power can maintain equilibrium, the problem would no longer arise. But is it truly as such? Perhaps even a Divine Descendant couldn't give him an answer. After all, until now there have never been anyone bold enough to cultivate two entirely opposing types of magic.

He grudgingly walked to the courtyard, dragging a wooden stool to sit on. His left hand was towing the wood knife while his right hand was holding the firewood in front of him. When he passed the wood knife to his right hand, Nian Bing's expression changed and became completely focused. His consciousness was completely concentrated on the firewood in front of him. The wood's grain was clearly scanned in his mind. He didn't move, only motionlessly observing the firewood. Zha Ji instructed him, only in the most suitable circumstance would he chop down, achieving

the greatest result. The most suitable circumstance was the moment when he completely understood the firewood in front of him.

His hand rose. The knife moved eight times in succession as if it were natural as water flowing, not slow in the least. The firewood stood still as before, not moving the slightest. The sharp wood knife reflected the sunlight with its metal luster.

Notes:

[1\]](#) The patterns contained in wood is known as [wood grain](#).

[2\]](#) Huang Jing is a Chinese Plant known by Taoists to prolong their life.

Chapter 4.1 – The Silver Feather Knight Regiment

Pu, Nian Bing blew at the firewood. The firewood's outer tree bark fell to pieces on either side. The log of firewood turned into a perfect even sided octagon. Those eight cuts a moment ago were only to remove the bark and have the firewood become a regular shape. Only like this could he chop the firewood into even pieces.

His left hand did not need to hold the firewood. Nian Bing was very confident in cutting the wood. Although his plumpness affected his body's flexibility, he still had the great assistance of his stability and strength. His plump face pouted, and the wood knife in his hand moved yet again. The wood knife was like a cool breeze, directly sweeping toward the firewood eight times, each producing a strip of wood. A fine line formed on the firewood as the knife separated from it, and the slices of wood laid down beside the tree bark.

While splitting the log, Nian Bing took extreme care; each cut was made with careful deliberation. The log of firewood appeared to fall into pieces. Surprisingly, the pieces were actually even. At least from the naked eye, they were difficult to distinguish from each other.

How much time does a log of firewood require? Normally, Nian Bing only needed to rapidly wave his knife many times, but today, he had to use half a day's worth of time.

Zha Ji did not know when he had stood behind Nian Bing. He hadn't uttered a word. Nian Bing, highly concentrating his spirit

power, had not heard him approach. His entire consciousness was focused on the firewood in front of him. Every cut he produced passed through careful deliberation beforehand.

Zha Ji smiled with satisfaction. Not only is chopping firewood is great way to temper one's strength, but it is also a great way to temper one's knife work. Perhaps common chefs would feel the heavy wood knife was too unwieldy, but that would be because they could not control the humble wood knife well. The ability required to use it is extremely high. Using the wood knife to practice knife work, requires the mind, eye and hand to be completely united. Compared to simple hand strengthening, chopping wood with the wood knife is an exquisite task.

After the last chop, he lifted the knife, and it flashed a cold light. The sound of clapping came from behind him. Nian Bing used his sleeve to wipe his sweaty forehead and turned around, finding his master. "Master, the wood I chopped this time can be considered even."

Zha Ji nodded and said, "Pretty good. Originally when I practiced chopping wood with the wood knife, only when I practiced for no less than three years did I initially succeed. You can now chop even pieces; this is proof that you've already reached the realm of Lesser Ascension."

Nian Bing happily asked, "Then do I still have to chop wood in the future?"

Zha Ji's complexion changed and seriously said, "You are still far too lacking. Although your chops can be considered even, they still

aren't completely even! Furthermore, your firewood pieces can still be cut even more thin. Besides, look at the amount of time you used. When will it be when you can completely chop up a log of thirty centimeters in diameter within three minutes? Only then will I recognize that you have passed."

Nian Bing disappointingly said, "Then I must practice until when? Everyday you tell me the principles of cooking, the methods of cooking, yet you don't let me truly practice through work. Like this, when will I finish my apprenticeship?"

Zha Ji faintly smiled and said, "Child, you must know that building the foundation is the most important. If you are anxious for quick results and don't have a good foundation, you will forever be unable to reach the highest realm of culinary arts. Chopping wood is indeed dull and uninteresting, but it tempers your hands, eyes and mind. Certainly, any other method could not achieve this. After you master chopping wood with the wood knife, when we advance to your other studies, you will learn at twice the speed with half the work." After saying this, he was in deep thought and it was as if his eyes gazed at the hairs of the firewood. "Consider the method of chopping firewood, it can equally be used for chopping up cooking ingredients. All ingredients are like firewood, each possessing their own characteristics and grains."

Nian Bing's heart moved. It was as if he had understood something. Actually, in his heart, he did not reject chopping firewood. Ever since he had chopped firewood for three months, he was surprised to discover that his spirit power had grown at an astonishing rate. This caused his control over magic to multiply several times over. His ordinary elementary magic was able to blossom more beautifully from his hands. His spirit power, magic

power, and magic control power all complemented one another. His spirit power was exceedingly strong, enabling him to absorb magic elements even faster and easier and control his magic even more cleverly. Who would have thought that the simple act of chopping firewood would actually produce such a large benefit?

Zha Ji looked at Nian Bing who had a slightly dull gaze and secretly thought to himself, Am I treating my disciple too harshly? If he knew that his comprehension is was unknowingly stronger compared to me at his age...! Just this method of chopping wood with a wood knife took me five years in order to have an initial success. Only ten years later when I finished my apprenticeship had I completely mastered it. Naturally, as I was learning the culinary arts at the same time, it was affected. However, looking solely at that boy's comprehension, mine is far inferior to his. In fact, I had already taught him genuine culinary arts. The everyday lectures had taught him theory and knowledge. The everyday food tempered his sense of smell and his ability to distinguish taste. But chopping firewood, that had given the most improvement. After he completes these and fuse them together, the speed at which he advances will become fast as lightning.

“Alright, go bring out the vehicle from the back of the wood house. We will set out with it.”

Nian Bing said with a blank stare, “Set off? Where are we going?” Ever since he arrived at the peach blossom forest, he had never left there. Neither had he seen leave either.

Zha Ji said, “It has been a while since I’ve went out. Although the vegetables we eat are picked from the peach blossom forest, we still

have to buy the essential seasonings. We also don't have much rice left. You've already been here a year. Going out for a walk will benefit you."

"That's great. I can finally go out." Although Nian Bing's thoughts are no longer comparable to a child's, he is only eleven years old after all. Everyday he lived a disciplined life there. He was already long past bored. Being able to go out for a walk, how could he not be excited? Throwing the wood knife to the side, he quickly dashed toward the back of the wooden room.

So that he would not disturb anyone, Zha Ji built the wooden house at the very center of the forest. Although this part of the forest was not small at all, there were no fierce or poisonous beasts because of the Peach Blossom Forest's Miasma. That is why he hadn't put up fences. But speaking of a man that has crippled hand tendons, making a house would already been exceptionally hard task.

The so called vehicle was a simple cart created from a mere log. Fortunately, the two wheels on it could still be considered round, as pushing it did not require much effort. Although in this past year Nian Bing became an adorable little fatty from a small handsome child, his physical strength was much stronger than before. Those nutritious foods he ate were not without effect, and along with the strengthening from chopping and splitting firewood, his strength was not at all small. Pushing the wooden cart forward was not one bit difficult.

"Master, if you are tired, sit on the cart, and I will pull you." Nian Bing was excited in his heart and couldn't help but to want to show

off his strength to Zha Ji.

Zha Ji chuckled and said, “I’m still not that old. You should save some strength. When we come back, I’m afraid you’ll have to pull quite a few things. In that time, don’t complain to me. We only go once a year. Think about it, how much will we need to buy?”

Nian Bing’s eyes turned to him and said, “Master! Recently, my cultivation of magic has been a bit rough, especially my fire magic. It doesn’t seem to be very stable. If I’m too tired, the control of the the fire magic in my body might cause a few problems. If you aren’t afraid that I’ll burn everything, then buying a few more things won’t matter.”

Zha Ji unhappily said, “Smelly brat, are you threatening me?”

“Not at all, I would never dare to threaten you.” Although Nian Bing’s mouth said as such, the smile in his eyes could not conceal his true thoughts. Zha Ji had no idea how to handle this magic capable disciple of his and groaned, “We’ll speak of this again when the moment comes.”

Although nobody enters the Peach Blossom Forest, whenever Zha Ji chopped wood, Zha Ji intentionally chopped opened a small path leading outside. Later, when Nian Bing began to chop wood, the task of opening up the path was handed over to him. Because he deliberately opened the path as he chopped wood, they easily departed from the Peach Blossom Forest.

When they walked away from the Peach Blossom Forest, the sun

was already approaching noon. As the Ice Moon Empire was located in the north of the Yang Guang Continent, the temperatures were relatively low. But with the sunlight shining down on them, there was still quite a bit of heat. But this was nothing to Nian Bing, as he held the Ice and Snow Goddess's Stone in his bosom. However, Zha Ji's health could not be considered well, and at this moment he was already somewhat out of breath.

“Boy, aren't you tired? Let's rest for a moment.” Zha Ji called Nian Bing to stop.

“Oh.” Nian Bing pulled the cart to beneath a big tree, and helped Zha Ji sit down in a shady, cool place. “Master, want me to cast a small enchantment on you to drive away the heat?”

Chapter 4.2 – The Silver Feather Knight Regiment

“Nevermind.” Zha Ji waved his hands in rejection, “Your magic is too extreme, I won’t be able to take it.” He could still remember clearly, the last time Nian Bing tried to cool the air in the room, he had nearly been frozen into a popsicle. Actually, even Nian Bing himself did not know that he had already advanced to the stage of intermediate rank mage; no matter fire or ice magic, he could use the first to third rank of spells. With the two top quality magic gems to help him cultivate, the effect was so much stronger than any normal mage.

“Master, I’m a little hungry already.” Nian Bing patted his rotund stomach.

Zha Ji shot him a glance, saying: “Just endure for a while more, we will eat when we get to Ice Snow City.”

“Ice Snow City?” a curious light appeared in Nian Bing’s eyes.

“Yes, Ice Snow City. In the Ice Moon Empire, all the cities names start with Ice, for example the capital city of Ice Moon Empire is called Ice Moon City. Ice Snow City is the second largest city in the Empire. Do you see that large road in front of us? As long as we follow that road all the way towards the southwest, we should reach in a few tens of kilometers.”

As Zha Ji spoke up till here, the sounds of horse hoofbeats could be heard, it wasn’t loud, as they were approaching from a distance,

but it was getting clearer. Looking at the direction from which the sound originated, a contingent of horses was traveling on the large road in the southwesterly direction. At the front of the contingent were 4 mounted knights, all riding on large horses and wearing the same silver light armor, looking extremely valorous. Each of them had a broadsword of about 3 feet long hung at their waist, and although they were headed in a forward direction, their gazes constantly swept the two sides of the road, showing their vigilance. Behind the four mounted knights was a horse carriage, which seemed large and splendid, being pulled along by 4 pure white large horses, and seemed large enough to fit 7, 8 men without any problems. The covering cloth of the carriage seemed to have silver threads embroidering some sort of pattern, although it was not a drawing, but it seemed to give forth an indistinct majestic aura. The carriage driver seemed to be of a similar age to Zha Ji, the reins were gripped in his hands as he leisurely controlled the four fine steeds, keeping the carriage moving in a stable motion. There were also 2 silver-armored mounted knights guarding each side of the horse carriage, and at the back followed another troupe of ten mounted knights, making a total of 18 mounted knights in the party, their orderly formation and dressing made them stand out strikingly, and although there was still quite some distance between them and where Zha Ji and Nian Bing were at, they were still could be seen clearly.

“Master, who are those people? They look so awe inspiring.” Nian Bing asked.

A light twinkled in Zha Ji’s eyes as he said: “They should be the family of some high ranking officials, though they probably aren’t from the Ice Moon Empire.”

Nian Bing asked inquiringly: “How do you know so clearly?”

Zha Ji gave a humph, saying: “Naturally ginger is spicier when older.* Look at the embroidery on their carriage, it is actually a type of artistic font in the Profound Orchid language. From this, we can tell that this horse carriage is from the Profound Orchid Empire, and those mounted knights are also beyond ordinary soldiers; they have definitely been forged in the blood and fires of the battlefield, otherwise they would not have such an aura of bloodlust. To be able to order around such true soldiers means their background has to be of a high ranking official. As such, I concluded that they are from the family of a high ranking official of the Profound Orchid Empire, perhaps even the official himself might be within the ranks.

[TL Zen – Chinese saying literally meaning older ginger is spicier, used to mean that older folk have more wisdom or experience, thus knowing much more]

After hearing this, Nian Bing could help but look towards him with eyes radiant with admiration. Being able to discern this much just from the it's outer appearances, his master could truly be called an “Old Spicy Ginger”.

Right at that moment, the sound of hurried hooves echoed from the other side, attracting Nian Bing's attention. He saw a cavalry unit rushing towards him with lightning speed before they all stopped in synchronization. Yet, they weren't alert at all. Instead, the four horseman dismounted.

There was a loud neigh as the incoming cavalry seemed to almost

crash into the carriage contingent. However, all of a sudden one of the horses was reined in, the entire horse nearly standing up on its two hind feet, before landing to the side, coming to a sudden halt despite the inertia; such a display of horsemanship could only be called a Godlike Talent. The rider on the horse was also another knight, and was also wearing the same silver armor as the other eighteen knights. The only difference was that his helmet had a long white feather on it.

Zha Ji gave a soft cry as enlightenment dawned upon him, “I know who they are already. Those seem to be members of the trump card cavalry unit of the Profound Orchid Empire, the Silver Feather Knight Regiment; for this person to be escorted by them, he must definitely be someone out of the ordinary.

“The Silver Feather Knight Regiment? What is that?” Nian Bing was like a scholar thirsting for knowledge who always voiced out the questions in his heart. Zha Ji did not show any signs of impatience at all, apparently he did want Nian Bing to know more about the various Empires in the continent as well as their relations, and said in a low tone: “The Silver Feather Knight Regiment is famous throughout the whole of Yang Guang Continent. They are the ultimate trump card of all the trump cards that the Profound Orchid Empire holds, and their legend resounds throughout the whole world. They have a different coloured feathers in their helmets according to their different ranks. In terms of martial ranking, from low to high – Warrior, Advanced Warrior, Swordmaster, Great Swordmaster, Martial Master, Martial Saint, and finally Martial God. In terms of ranking, warriors and mages have a similar ranking system. However, you have to know that in a 1v1 close combat situation, a mage would be hard pressed to defeat a warrior. Of course, this is not absolute. As far as I know, after a mage has reached the rank of Magic Scholar,

similar ranked warriors will find it difficult to even pose a threat to mages. Within the ranks of warriors, a Martial God would be the equivalent of the mage's Descended God. It would be difficult to find anyone that may perhaps know the degree of the awesome might they may have possessed. That is because currently, Martial Gods only exist in legends. At least there were still existed Divine Descendants in the Ice God's Pagoda. I have never before heard of the martial rank of Martial God. Perhaps they existed only in the age conflicts decades past. But now, they have all passed away. As for the soldiers of this Silver Feather Knight Regiment that in front of us, all have the strength of a swordmaster or higher. Especially the one who should be their squad leader, the one with a white feather sticking out of his helmet, had the strength of a great swordmaster. Although they were light cavalry, the nature of their attack did not differ one bit from heavy cavalry. In addition their speed and flexibility were greatly superior. And with the coordination of their group attack, on this continent, only a pitifully few knight regiments could possibly contend with them.

Nian Bing spit repeatedly and replied, "Ah, so powerful! Wouldn't those ten thousand Sword Master ranked warriors be able to defeat ten thousand Advanced Mages?"

Zha Ji stared at him with wide eyes and said, "You're really so unknowledgeable! Don't tell anyone else that you're my disciple."

Nian Bing snorted in response. "Does being your disciple really have that much face? I don't think it necessarily does. Of course I know how formidable the might of ten thousand mages would be in a genuine war. I fear that if they assembled and simultaneously cast their magics, even the most powerful of knight regiments wouldn't be able to overcome them. The mages wouldn't be foolish

enough to engage the knights in close combat. What I'm talking about is simply comparing their strengths."

Zha Ji unhappily groaned at Nian Bing's response. "Smelly brat, are you playing dumb with me? It seems that you understand more than just a little."

Nian Bing grinned and said, "Of course it's like that. Those wars between the great empires always follow the same style. The soldiers charge in the front lines while the mages bombard from the back lines. It's just a battle of attrition. Where's the meaning in that?"

Zha Ji shook his head and grimly explained, "No, that's wrong. War is also a form of art, the art of iron and blood. If it were truly as simple as you make it out to be, those famous generals would be useless. Regardless, none of this matters to us. You'll be fine as long as you continue mastering the art of cooking in the future."

The newly arrived Silver Feather Knights dismounted. They walked to the front of the carriage before respectfully saying, "Madam and Young Mistress, there are still several tens of kilometers before we reach Ice Snow City. I have already found a good inn in the city. Will you prefer we take a short rest first or to press on and rush to Ice Snow City for lunch?"

A somewhat lazy yet soothing voice came from the carriage. "Captain Feng, this place isn't too bad. We'll rest here first. After all, everyone must be tired after being on the road for so long."

Captain Feng respectfully answered, “Yes Madam.” After saying this, he gave a meaningful glance to the rest of the knights and they all dismounted. They started walking towards Zha Ji and Nian Bing who were resting at the side of the road. Coincidentally, the location where Zha Ji was currently resting was an open space with several trees blocking out the sunshine, creating a jagged dance of shadows, giving it a cooling feel.

These knights had clearly noticed Zha Ji and Nian Bing long ago, and one of the knights took large strides towards them and coldly said, “Please leave immediately.” As he said this, he threw some silver coins to Zha Ji.

On the Yang Guang Continent, the currency of every country was interchangeable. The most precious were amethyst gold coins. One amethyst gold coin was equal to ten gold coins, a hundred silver coins, or a thousand copper coin. A few silver coins were enough to sustain an ordinary household for half a month. These knights could be regarded as very liberal with their money.

Chapter 4.3 – The Silver Feather Knight Regiment

Zha Ji was once the Demon Chef, and he had always received courteous and grand receptions no matter where he went. Looking at the few silver coins thrown to them, he did not even give them a single glance and said coldly: “Do you think we are beggars? This is a major road, not your house.”

The knight took another step forward with his expression unchanged, but his imposing manner gave out an increasing pressure, and he repeated his former words, “Please leave immediately.”

“What basis do you have to be so overbearing?” Nian Bing said angrily, standing in front of his Master. Although he clearly knew that the knight had the strength of a swordmaster, but he did not have any fear.

Looking at the little fatty in front of him, the knight’s eyebrows furrowed, his hand gripping the sword hilt on his waist, repeating for a third time: “Please leave immediately.” Very obviously, if he was rejected again, he would begin attacking.

At this time, two women got off the horse-drawn carriage, and the angelic voice sounded out once more, “Enough, this is not our territory, we are traveling now, do not cause unnecessary trouble for others others.” The attractive sound caught Nian Bing’s attention, and when he saw the two beautiful forms, he couldn’t help but be dazed momentarily.

The lady in front appeared to have an appearance of 27-28 years old. She was wearing a blue [qipao](#) with silver embroideries, each having its own beautiful design. She had long, shapely eyebrows, a nose of jade, creamy white skin, a head of long, dark green hair that spread out from behind her like a waterfall, bound with a silver ring, and blue eyes as clear as water. Her face wore a faint smile, looking toward Nian Bing.

Nian Bing was completely dazed, his normally stable hands were slightly shivering. Zha Ji looked at her, and praised her silently in his heart, even after having traveled the mainland for so many years, he had not seen many beautiful young women of such quality.

“Little Pervert, who allowed you to look at my mother like that.” The little girl at the side of the young woman suddenly jumped up, both hands at her waist, giving Nian Bing a discontented look. She looked to be around 12-13 years of age, wearing a white dress, bearing some resemblance to the beautiful woman, though with a slightly childish air. Although she was currently angry, it still did not reduce her cuteness. With her short dark green hair dropped down to just over her ears, and her hands on her waist, it greatly displayed her naivety and innocence.

“Mom, Mom.” Tears gleamed in Nian Bing’s eyes, and he suddenly shouted out loud: “Mom... Mom!” Zha Ji was not holding on to him, and he suddenly rushed towards the beautiful young woman.

The knight who was in front of them reacted extremely quickly,

with one step, he blocked Nian Bing's advance. But at this moment, nothing else existed for Nian Bing except that beautiful woman, the seemingly fat body quickly moved to one side, and his right hand subconsciously pulled out the long sword from the knight's waist, and using the sword like a knife, he struck seven blows with lightning speed towards the knight. At the same time, his left hand's fingers flicked, and two icicles flew out towards the knight's eyes without warning.

As a swordmaster, furthermore a Silver Feather Knight, he definitely had gone through the trial of blood and fire. Even so, facing a child who did not even come up to his waist, how much precaution could he have? The sword which had been his companion for so many years seemed to come alive in Nian Bing's hands, and the seven continuous flowing blows did not seem to have any particular style except for one word – speed. His self-preservation instincts kicking in subconsciously, the Knight's body bent backwards, dodging the icicles and sword coming at him; however, though he successfully managed to dodge the ice cons, but the 7 swift blows were not so easily dodged. Nian Bing had been training by chopping firewood the whole year, and his wrist had been strengthened to that of an adult's. The sword instantly struck the knight's armor, causing sparks to fly out. Even though he had not caused any real damage to the knight, but he had certainly made him look bad.

The time in between was more than sufficient for Nian Bing, as he swiftly bypassed the knight and flew swiftly towards the beautiful woman, tears streaming down his plump cheeks, his whole body seemingly imbued with a sorrowful aura.

To a knight, his sword is his life; having his sword taken from

him and used against him could be said to be the greatest insult possible. Furthermore, the one who did so was just a child! The knight who had seemed so calm previously shouted out in anger, and with a quick step, he had already chased Nian Bing from behind, a dim blue light coalescing around his right hand, striking towards Nian Bing's head.

“Be careful!” Zha Ji cried out in alarm.

However, at this moment, Nian Bing's eyes and heart were totally focused on the beautiful lady, and he ignored Zha Ji's warning, the knight's sword still in his hand as he ran forward, without a clue about the angry palm behind him which was speeding towards his head like a death god – that blow would be more than enough to kill him several times over.

“He is just a child.” A soft sigh rang out as a figure flashed out, and soft beautiful hand covered in silver light blocking the knight's blow. The knight was knocked back several steps before regaining his balance, staggering around as his face flushed red.

The one who had suddenly saved Nian Bing was the beautiful lady, and when her figure vanished from Nian Bing's eyes, he had also halted, before realising that she was just beside him. He immediately threw down the sword in his hands, crying out in woe: “Mama...” Like a young swallow returning to its nest, he threw himself into her embrace. Of course, if a young swallow was as fat as him, it probably would not be able to fly up.

The beautiful woman was rather stunned, as she held Nian Bing's shoulders, and she was momentarily at a loss. Before marriage, she

had been known for her fiery temper, and although she had reigned in her temper a little after marriage, but those who knew of her reputation usually kept their distance from her. Besides her husband, if any other man dared touch her, he would probably be chopped into pieces. However, looking at the sobbing, depressed Nian Bing in her arms, a motherly instinct rose within her, and she did not resist but instead enveloped him in her embrace.

“Child, don’t cry. Tell Aunty, what happened to you?” She said in a gentle tone.

“Mama, Mama, don’t leave me, don’t leave me.” All of Nian Bing’s repressed emotions as he missed his mother suddenly welled out, and he started crying out loud in her arms.

The little girl who was accompanying her mother saw that her mother had been ‘taken’ by someone else, and instantly ran over and pushed Nian Bing, “What are you doing! I won’t allow you to hug my mother.”

The little girl had a surprising strength, even if Nian Bing was prepared he wouldn’t be able to compare in strength. Being unprepared, he stumbled and fell to the side, but at the moment he had been clutching the woman’s skirt, and a tearing sound rang out, and with a cry of surprise from the beautiful woman, her skirt had been torn, causing part of her legs to be revealed. She immediately flushed deep red, quickly clutching the remnants of her skirt to cover herself. The knights around quickly turned their bodies, praying inwardly: ‘I didn’t see anything, I didn’t see anything. If the Marquis knows what happened, I’m afraid he will dig out our eyes.’

“Chen Chen, what are you doing?” After the beautiful woman covered her delicate body, she angrily rebuked her daughter beside her.

Feeling wronged, Chen Chen said, “Mother, Why did he call you mother? You are my mother only .”

The beautiful woman looked at her daughter tenderly and helplessly shook her head. A silver radiance appeared, gathering near the tattered skirt and causing the remnants to bind together. Although it could be considered awkward, at the very least it could be considered to have been restored to a full state.

Nian Bing fell for a moment and the blow actually calmed his mind down a little. Zha Ji was already running toward him and helped him off the floor. “Nian Bing, what’s wrong?” His eyes displayed worry. Currently, what Zha Ji feared the most was that Nian Bing had broken his memory seal.

Nian Bing got up and let Zha Ji slap the dust off of him, all while staring foolishly at the beautiful woman. He mumbled, “You, you aren’t Mama. Mama’s hair is blue.”

The beautiful woman had already corrected her dress. She gently walked in front of Nian Bing and said, “Child, could it be that your mother and I share a great resemblance?”

Nian Bing firmly nodded.

The beautiful woman looked at his plump, small face, and her eyes could not help but display a tender radiance, “Then where is your mother?”

Nian Bing’s mind was clear now, so he lowered his head and lightly shook it. “I don’t know. I only have my master.”

Hearing those words, Zha Ji let out a sigh of release and hastily said, “Madam, please excuse us. My apprentice had lost both his parents. Perhaps it is because he greatly misses his mother that he offended you. I hope you would forgive this.”

The beautiful woman gave a faint smile, “It doesn’t matter. This child is really adorable.”

Chen Chen came closer and resentfully pouted her small mouth, saying, “But he isn’t as cute as me. He is so fat, like a ball. So ugly, I could die.” In fairness, although Nian Bing had gotten a tad fat, he was still quite young after all. And with addition to his originally handsome face, he truly could not be regarded as ugly. Although Chen Chen said this, she thought to herself, ‘This small fatty has a very amusing appearance.’

Chapter 5.1 – Blue Fields On A Warm Day, Mist Rises From The Jade

At this point, Nian Bing's brain had already awoken. Ignoring Chen Chen's attacks at him, he faced the beautiful woman and said, "Auntie, you really do look like my mama. I, I....." Nian Bing couldn't continue. His eyes couldn't help but turn red thinking about his parents.

The beautiful woman consoled him and said, "Child, don't cry. If you wish, the auntie will become your mother. How about that?" Her motherly instincts caused these words to subconsciously come out of her mouth. It was only after the words left her mouth that she became aware of how rude she was being. After all, she didn't even know the old man and child in front of her. But with her status, how could she possibly take back the words that came out of her mouth?

Nian Bing glanced to the side and saw Chen Chen's complexion pale. In response, he unexpectedly shook his head and said, "There's no need. Thank you auntie, but when all's said and done, you're not my mother. I don't need you to take pity on me." His eyes displayed a trace of unwavering determination as he said this. At this instance, Nian Bing's short and stout body actually appeared as if it was a bit taller than usual.

The beautiful woman was a little stunned within her heart. This child was so young, yet he had such a temperament! When he grows up, he will certainly grow into an impressive person. These thoughts moved her heart. She reached into her bosom and took out a jade tile and placed it in Nian Bing's hand with a smile. "It

doesn't matter. Our meeting was brought together by fate. This jade tile represents auntie's trust. On top of it is my name. If you ever encounter any troubles within the Profound Orchid Empire, just show them this and it should be of some use to you.

“Mom, why did you give him the Heavenly Flower Tile? I've asked you so many times yet you still haven't given it to me.” Chen Chen furiously glared at Nian Bing as she said this. If her mother wasn't by her side, she might have went over and taken it by force.

The jade tile felt sleek and warm in his hands. It appeared as if a breath of warm air flowed along the hollow of his palm and into his body, causing his body to be overcome with a comfortable feeling. A grateful light appeared within Nian Bing's eyes and he didn't decline it. “Thank you Auntie. Auntie, you really are a good person!”

Fearing that Nian Bing's hypnosis seal had been broken when he faced this beautiful woman, Zha Ji pulled him away from the beautiful woman and said, “Madam, we must hasten on with our journey so we'll be leaving first. Thank you for showing concern for this child.” Finished with his farewell, Zha Ji pulled Nian Bing to the large tree on the side. He began pushing the wooden cart onto the main road heading towards Ice Snow City.

As Captain Feng watched Nian Bing and Zha Ji return, he whispered to the beautiful woman, “Madam, isn't wrong to give a Heavenly Flower tile to such an ordinary person, I'm afraid that his Lordship might.....”

The beautiful woman snorted in response. “What do you

understand? Have you ever seen an ordinary ten year old child that is able to cast rudimentary spells in a flash before? I have a premonition that in the future, that child will surely become famous across the continent. Your eyes must look at things in the long-term Captain Feng. I suggest that you manage your own subordinates first. Quickly go eat, afterwards we'll be preparing to be on our way. We're returning to the carriage, Chen Chen." Saying this, the beautiful woman held her daughter's hand before quickly disappearing into the carriage together.

Captain Feng had met with a snag, yet he wasn't resentful at all. He looked towards his subordinate who had previously lost his sword. With an indifferent demeanor, Captain Feng walked in front of his subordinate and said, "Hand over your Feather."

Shaking in fear the knight tried to speak : "Captain, I....."

The eyes of the captain grew cold as he repeated to the knight, "Hand over your Feather. I won't say it a third time. "

The knight seemed to lose all his strength. From his chest armor, he took out an azure feather that was approximately thirty centimeters long, and handed it over to the captain.

Captain Feng coldly said, "Letting a child snatch away your sword; you've already lost the right to be a Silver Feather Knight. I declare that from henceforth, that I have demoted you down to a probationary knight. You will be punished once again once we've returned to the regiment. Do you accept this?"

With his head down, he looked at the faint blade marks left on his silver armor, “Yes, captain.”

Captain Feng’s strict gaze swept across all the other knights and said sternly, “You all should know what you must do. Defend your knight’s honor, defend it even more dearly than your own life. Starting now, everyone must give me their 120%. If something like this happens again, the punishment will be even more severe.”

.....

After talking with the beautiful woman, an intense longing flared for his mother in Nian Bing’s heart. He seemed to be even more silent than he was ordinarily. Zha Ji was worried about what he was thinking. While they were walking, Zha Ji told Nian Bing about a few interesting stories about his own experiences. Nian Bing was a child after all. After listening for a while to Zha Ji’s narration, Nian Bing’s emotions subsided and his lively nature resumed.

“Master, a moment ago that Auntie gave me a jade tile.” Before they had departed earlier, in order to push the cart, he had pocketed the jade tile into his bosom in passing. The jade tile had an indescribable aura. Though it was mild, it was one of the reasons that his mood quickly became serene. With that said, Nian Bing only used one hand to pull the cart, with his other hand fishing out the jade tile from his bosom.

The jade tile was not large and had the shape of a rectangle. It was about the same length as Nian Bing’s pinky and was entirely milky white. It was warm to the touch, and on top of it there was a

very realistic looking phoenix engraved. The eyes of the phoenix was actually a tiny red gem embedded in the jade tile, and it really completed the look of the entire jade tile. On top of the jade tile, there was a small hole which seemed to be for the purpose of threading a string through. There was a dim white mist that seemed to emit from the jade tile, covering it, and if not for the sun shining directly upon it, it would be hard to detect.

Zha Ji's gaze rested upon Nian Bing's hands; earlier on he had been in a rush to get away from them, and had not noticed what the beautiful woman had given Nian Bing. Now that he had taken a good look at the jade tile, he had been given a big surprise, as he was the Demon Chef in the past, he had seen a lot of the world; even though Nian Bing did not recognize the amazing object that it was, how could he not recognize it?

“The tears of an azure sea moon pearl! Blue fields on a warm day, mist rises from the jade. Heavens! The warm blue mist rising from the jade. Heavens! The enshrouding mist of treasure is so obvious, this has to be the famed Harmonic Field Jade, this woman is too generous already.

Nian Bing hesitatingly said: “ Is the Harmonic Field jade precious?”

Zha Ji took the jade tile from Nian Bing's hands to examine it closely, and couldn't help but exclaim in praise: “Of course it is precious, in fact, this isn't an ordinary Harmonic Field Jade, but it is the Suet White Jade which is the rarest amongst all Harmonic Field Jade, and is the most valuable as well. I used to have a friend who was in the jade business, and he once told me that the Suet

White Jade was the top quality jade amongst all jade stones, its inner radiance, a smooth creamy form as if congealed from fat, unyieldingly clean and a profound gentleness; wearing it will also bring harmony to the mind, and protecting you from evil or poisons, and is definitely of great benefit to anyone. Look at this jade tile, doesn't it have all those qualities? Furthermore, the engraving is extremely detailed and realistic, this is definitely a real treasure, and wearing it will allow you to keep calm and peaceful. This is definitely something useful, and the ability to always keep calm is extremely useful for a chef as well." As he said that, he looked to the back of the jade tile, and saw three words carved into the back with ancient script. "'Yu Ru Yan', this should be the woman's name. It is truly the name befitting the person. Still, this is almost too generous."

While laughing, Nian Bing said: "Auntie really is a good person, when I'm finished learning how to cook, I'll make her something delicious to taste."

Zha Ji thought for a while, then returned the jade tile to Nian Bing "Let's go. When we reach the Ice Snow City I'll buy you a red string to thread through it. So you can wear it around your neck. Its qualities will be even more evident then."

The two of them continued on their journey. After they had moved ahead for a while, they heard rushed, yet orderly galloping from the back. Looking back, they saw it was Yu Ru Yan's troupe that they had met earlier. This time, the troupe did not stop, instead rushed past them. As Nian Bing looked at the horse cart, he saw the covering blinds be moved aside a little, and Chen Chen glaring at him from within. Just as he was about to glare back, the troupe had already moved on too far ahead.

Zha Ji saw that Nian Bing's face turned bright red. He said "What is it? Did you fall in love with the madam's daughter at first sight? Although there is a huge gap in social statuses aside, that might change in the future. Leave this matter of love until you're older."

Hearing Zha Ji, Nian Bing replied: "Only a demon would find her attractive. As soon as people see her crafty and unruly temperament, they will quickly find her annoying."

Zha Ji said with a faint smile, "Meeting on the road is also a sign of fate, in the future if you travel in the Profound Orchid Empire, you might meet her again. Alright, it's getting late. Let's get moving. It looks like we'll finally get to rest in the city for a night."

Chapter 5.2 – Blue Fields On A Warm Day, Mist Rises From The Jade

Ice Snow City, Ice Moon Empire's second largest city. Looking at it from a distance, the city walls were several tens of meters tall, and extremely wide. Although it couldn't be described as threatening, the entire city standing tall gave a stable and steady feeling. The Azure Sky River flowed in from the west of Ice Snow City, and the entire city was actually built around the river, making use of the river water. Although it was not as famous as the Capital of Ice Moon Empire, Ice Moon City, or the Ice God's Pagoda, it was absolutely one of the economic hubs of the empire. Many large merchant federations were based in Ice Snow City, and its population was several million strong. Several dozen years of peace had allowed it to become truly prosperous.

Nian Bing and Zha Ji approached the city from the north. Being inconspicuously dressed as commoners, the guards at the gate did not question them and they easily entered the city.

After entering the city, they immediately noticed a change in atmosphere. The Peach Blossom Forest had an otherworldly beauty and life to it, but the bustling streets of Ice Snow City showed a different type of prosperity. The streets of the city were lined with cordierite and all sorts of shops stood on both sides of every road, and the whole city bustled with noise. Although Nian Bing had been here a year ago, he had spent the rest of the year in a quiet and peaceful setting, so he was unused to this environment.

“Master, what are we going to buy now?” Nian Bing asked.

Zha Ji smiled faintly and said, “This time, we are here to buy many things. We need to buy several sacks of rice so we do not need to come back here so often, and we also need to get some good spices and condiments. Oh yes, I also need to buy you a good knife; you will be officially start learning how to cook soon. A chef’s knife is like a warrior’s weapon; they are the most important tools of their trades. Only a good knife will allow you to make use of all your skills. It would be best to buy you a knife with a magic stone so you can make use of your magic while cooking with your ingredients.. I’m not sure about other chefs, but for me, the most important kitchen utensil is the knife.

As soon as he heard Zha Ji say that he was going to buy him a knife, Nian Bing grew excited, “That’s great, Master! I can finally stop using the cleaver already. You must buy me a good one, but... do you have enough money?”

Zha Ji gave a humph, saying, “Remove that question mark. Your master was, after all, once the great Demon Chef. I wouldn’t be able to spend all of my savings even if you gave me several lifetimes. How else do you think I survived alone in the Peach Blossom Forest all these years, choosing that place just because I enjoyed the peace and quiet?”

Nian Bing grinned and said, “That means Master is a rich man, then. But what knife do you use? I didn’t notice anything special about the knife you usually use?”

Zha Ji sighed as he said, “My own knife... I have long since sealed it. Since I am no longer the Demon Chef of the past, how can I let such a treasured knife follow me into obscurity? If your cooking

skills reach a level that meets my standards in the future, I might give it to you.”

“Let’s go, don’t keep thinking about knives. Even if you get a great knife now, you won’t be able to make full use of it. Let’s go buy rice first.” With that said, Zha Ji brought Nian Bing deeper into the Ice Snow City, and, due to his familiarity with the city, it was not long before the cart Nian Bing was pushing was filled with goods: basic necessities, foodstuffs, spices and condiments – Zha Ji bought them in bulk, along with a few sets of rough cloth clothes for changing. Of course, he also did not forget to buy a string for Nian Bing as he had promised. Now the jade tile was worn on Nian Bing’s neck, its warmth pressing close to his chest, giving him an extremely comfortable feeling.

As he pushed the increasingly heavy cart, Nian Bing complained, “Master, I’m getting hungry, let’s get some food first before continuing shopping!”

Looking at his plump little disciple, Zha Ji laughed and said, “You already have so much fat on you, you won’t have any problems skipping a meal. But alright! Anyway we are almost done with our shopping, come, let’s find an inn to stay at before we eat. Tonight, I will bring you to look for a suitable knife.”

Nian Bing sighed in relief, pointing to a small inn right in front of them saying, “Master, let’s just stay here, I really can’t move anymore.”

Zha Ji nodded, saying, “Alright then, I’ve stayed there before. Although only average, it is quite clean.”

The inn was named 'Living Beings'. As the two of them, one old, one young, pushed the cart towards the inn's entrance, a staff member came out to greet them with a smile, saying, "Do you two want to stay in our inn? We have all the basic necessities, provide hot water all day and night, and our pricing is very reasonable."

Zha Ji said rather impatiently, "Alright, enough with the sales pitch, we will be staying here. Please move our cart into the courtyard."

As they entered the inn, Zha Ji brought Nian Bing to the counter and said, "Give us a standard room, one with two beds."

The clerk at the counter was an ordinary looking, 18-19 year old youth, who smiled faintly and said, "The price per day of lodging is one silver coin, please pay now."

"Wait a minute, we want two single rooms." Nian Bing quickly said.

Zha Ji asked curiously, "Why do we need two rooms?"

Nian Bing stuck his tongue out at him, saying, "Master, ah, normally you sleep next door, but your snoring can still shake me awake. If we are in the same room, I won't be able to sleep! I still need to push the cart home tomorrow; please take pity on this fat little body of mine."

Zha Ji flushed in embarrassment, and passed two silver coins to the clerk, saying, “Fine, two rooms then. Is my snoring that loud?” The clerk took the silver coins, struggling not to laugh out loud, and assigned the pair two adjacent rooms.

Zha Ji took the keys and said to Nian Bing, “Weren’t you hungry? Let’s just have a meal here.”

The dining area of the inn was not very luxurious, only about a hundred or so square meters, and contained several neatly arranged tables. As Zha Ji had mentioned earlier, although the place was not too grand, it was quite clean. It was not a normal meal time, so the dining area was still very quiet. Zha Ji brought Nian Bing to a table near the street, where they could observe the bustling streets.

“What do you want to order?” A waitress walked up to them and lazily asked. She naturally did not feel a need to be very respectful to people like Nian Bing and Zha Ji who were dressed in commoner’s clothes.

Zha Ji said, “Four steamed buns, a bowl of white porridge, and some salted vegetables will do.”

A contemptuous look flashed in the waitress’s eyes, and she didn’t even bother writing the order down. “Wait here, it will come in a while.”

Staring dumbfoundedly at the leaving waitress, Nian Bing gave a weird cry. “Master, didn’t you just say you were rich? Why be so

miserly now? How can just eating steamed buns be enough nourishment?”

Zha Ji said exasperatedly, “Silly, do you think you can eat these outside foods? After getting used to eating my cooking, if you eat the food from these ordinary dining halls, I guarantee you will immediately vomit.”

Nian Bing said suspiciously, “Master, I know you are the Great Demon Chef, but you can’t look down so much on other people. Even if their food isn’t as good as yours, there shouldn’t be such a huge difference right, if not, how could they have become chefs as well?”

Zha Ji gave him a strange smile, and said, “Alright, you don’t believe me? Let’s order two dishes of green vegetables, and you can try for yourself. If I am no different from an ordinary cook, how could I have possibly won the World Championships five times in a row.” Then he called the waitress back and ordered the two dishes.

Although the attitude of the waitress wasn’t great, the green vegetables were easy to make and the steamed buns and porridge were pre-cooked, so everything was served quickly. By then Nian Bing was already very hungry, so he quickly scooped a large number of green vegetables into his mouth.

“Wah! Peh, peh, peh.” Before he could even chew twice, he had already spat out the mouthful of green vegetables. “What is this?! It tastes disgusting, all covered with the taste of uncooked oil! When they fried this the oil was definitely not heated up first, and their fire control was terrible! The vegetables are not fully cooked

and their fragrance had not been brought out at all; instead they added so much salt and MSG – this is terrible!”

Zha Ji did not mock Nian Bing, but instead nodded his head in satisfaction. “En, not bad, looks like you learned well during this past year. You can basically call out all of the dish’s problems. Looks like you still have quite some talent. Your Master will reward you today by showing you some real cooking. Staff!”

Chapter 5.3 – Blue Fields On A Warm Day, Mist Rises From The Jade

When the waitress, who stood to the side, heard Nian Bing say that their food was disgusting, she could no longer stay calm and collected. She said snappily, “What did you say? This is how our food tastes in this restaurant. If you wanted to eat delicacies, you should have gone to Grand Pavilion or the Pure House in the city. The food there is good, but I’m afraid you couldn’t afford them.”

Zha Ji coldly glanced at her before taking out a gold coin. “Stop driveling and bring us to the kitchen. We just need to use your ingredients to cook only one dish.”

After seeing the sparkling gold coin, the waitress’ eyes lit up instantly. “Misters, please come this way.” A gold coin was able to buy an entire table of food, and they only wanted to make a dish. No matter how expensive the ingredients they used, they would definitely rake in a large profit.

The kitchen and the restaurant were only separated by a wall. Even though the kitchen couldn’t be said to be simple nor crude, it was obvious that the kitchen tools had been used for a long time already. Zha Ji couldn’t stop himself from frowning. There were only two chefs in the kitchen. They cooked the dishes eaten previously.

The waitress walked to the side of one of the chefs and whispered a few words in his ear. That chef frowned but curiously looked at Zha Ji. He impatiently said, “You can use anything you like in this kitchen. The ingredients can be found over in that area. We are

elated to have a break. Brother, let's go!" After he said that, he left the kitchen with the other chef to cool off in the shade in the backyard.

Zha Ji looked at Nian Bing before whispering, "I'll teach you how to cook your very first dish today. How long can you use your fire magic?"

Nian Bing thought for a moment before replying. "If it is just a normal flame, I can use it for an hour without any complications."

"Alright! Let's start. You go and get a wok and scrub it clean."

Nian Bing simply agreed, even though he didn't know what Zha Ji wanted to do. He immediately went to get a wok from the corner of the kitchen and scrubbed it clean. Zha Ji had already gone to where the ingredients were stored as Nian Bing went to scrub the wok. It was obvious that the ingredients had been washed. As Zha Ji glanced at the ingredients, he took some of them out and placed them on the chopping board. He continued on to put some seasonings on the kitchen table.

"Except for the tomato, you can cut the vegetables into strips."

"Yes, teacher." Nian Bing picked up a kitchen knife. His expression became focused the moment the knife entered his hand, and he didn't waste his year's worth of bitter training as the feeling of the knife fused with him, forming one entity, making the eleven year old look incisive. The different types of vegetables in front of him weren't significantly different, as they were only

slightly different from chopping wood. That chubby hand of his placed the vegetables in front of him. The knife moved so fast that it only flashed light. The waitress couldn't figure out how Nian Bing cut the vegetables, whether it was potatoes, carrots or onions, entirely into even strips. Nian Bing easily finished his task after a few blinks of an eye.

Zha Ji smiled and passed an empty mixing bowl to Nian Bing. "In cooking, one of the most important components is seasoning. The requirement of this dish that I want you to do isn't hard, so I'll totally pass it to you to cook. You should first chop the tomatoes, prawns and oysters into a paste separately before placing them in the mixing bowl."

"En!" He followed Zha Ji's instructions after agreeing. His knife seemed to be flying as the fine chopping made a crisp rhythm on the chopping board. Zha Ji didn't stay idle either. He used another mixing bowl, put a few different seasonings in and used his bare hands to mix them evenly. Zha Ji had finished his part and combined the prepared seasonings with the tomato, prawn, and onion paste, at the same time Nian Bing finished his job. He passed a chopstick to Nian Bing and said, "Stir them evenly."

Zha Ji smiled after Nian Bing stirred the ingredients evenly and said, "The next part is starting now." He took a small brush and tossed it to Nian Bing. His expression became serious and he spoke at his fastest speed. "Mix one third of the seasoning sauces at the bottom of the bowl and follow that by placing all of the chopped ingredients on top, and finally, brush another third of the seasonings on top of everything."

Nian Bing was accustomed to the speed of Zha Ji's speech as it was not uncommon in the kitchen. He was able to understand Zha Ji, though unfamiliar with the kitchen, and was still able to finish everything quickly.

Zha Ji brought a board of sliced fish and placed it in the wok that contained the prepared seasoning sauces. "Waitress, can you please step outside?" He wasn't willing to let her know that Nian Bing could use magic.

The waitress was stunned for a while. "But...."

Zha Ji impatiently said, "Don't worry! We won't burn down the kitchen."

The waitress, who wouldn't dare to utter a word as she had been given a gold coin, had no other choice but to leave the kitchen. Only Nian Bing and Zha Ji were left.

Zha Ji smiled and said, "Brush the remaining sauces over the ingredients and start using your fire magic to heat up the wok."

"Passionate fire elements! I plead to you to gather from a flame of light and bring warmth to the world. Fire magic!" A red flame shone brightly from Nian Bing's right hand, he held the wok in his left hand and then let his flame heat the wok up from beneath.

Zha Ji smiled. "Your flame spell's temperature must be hotter than ordinary fire. You must heat it up evenly so that we can dig

into the food as soon as possible. You must also remember the steps that I taught you previously. This is one of the easiest dishes and is known as the Three Sauces Marinated Fish. Because the ingredients used were just average, it won't taste as good, but is still acceptable."

As Nian Bing continued to heat up the wok, he asked Zha Ji, "Aren't you afraid that the waitress would also learn how to make this dish?"

Zha Ji smiled as he replied, "I came up with the combination of the seasonings. There were more than ten types of seasoning. How could she remember? The amount of seasonings used were also very important so it won't be that easy to learn it. You have to hold your fire. We should be able to eat it by the time half an incense stick has passed. The key components are the seasoned sauces. The three sauces are: the seafood sauces, tomato sauce, and the potatoes, carrots and onions. The three layers of sauces will all be eaten at once, including the fish flavor, so as to be able to know the real essence of the dish. For how to season the sauces, I'll explain it to you in detail after we head back." As he said that, he put a cover over the wok.

Nian Bing had used low grade ice magic to protect his left hand so it wouldn't be scorched by the hot wok. The fragrance permeated from the wok after being cooked by Nian Bing's flames. Nian Bing couldn't help but to swallow a mouthful of his saliva after he smelled the fragrance leaking from the wok.

The time of half an incense stick had passed.

“It smells so fragrant. Where is this coming from?”

“It is really fragrant. I have never smelled such a fragrant dish before. It couldn’t be the doing of that old man, right?”

The two chefs that went to relax ran towards the kitchen. When they entered, they saw that Nian Bing was holding a wok. It was also the source of the fragrance they smelled earlier. After Zha Ji looked at the two chefs, he flatly said, “You can only look. You aren’t allowed to taste the food.”

They seemed as though they didn’t hear what Zha Ji had said as the two chefs just stared at the wok. They similarly swallowed their saliva just as Nian Bing had done. One of the chefs asked, “Hey! What did you two cook? It’s so fragrant.”

Just as Nian Bing wanted to reply to him, he was intercepted by Zha Ji. As he looked at Nian Bing, he said, “You have to remember about knowing whom you give your food to because not everyone has the right to eat your cooking. Chefs also have their dignity. They can only give their food to those who deserve it. Let’s go!”

“Master, I’m beginning to admire you more and more! This dish is simply too delicious! I truly don’t know what I would do if I were to part with you.” Nian Bing said as he patted his bulging stomach in content and comfortably moaned.

It could be seen how good the fish, marinated with three sauces, tasted from how Nian Bing ate it. He had wiped out eighty percent of it just by himself. He also had two more steamed buns. He ate

his meal messily and after finishing, his clothes were stained by the different sauces. Except for the fish bones, the wok was left with only a little bit of the sauces. The waitress stood to the side with her eyes wide open.

Zha Ji chuckled and said, “Don’t be anxious. You’ll soon know how to cook your own dishes. If you want to keep on eating good food, you can’t rely on anyone but yourself.”

Nian Bing felt something ominous was going to happen, but the Zha Ji he knew wouldn’t tell him what was going to happen even if he asked him. He feared what he would be experiencing once they got back wouldn’t be good.

As he looked at his incredibly dirty, precious disciple, Zha Ji said snappily, “You should rest up now before finding a weapon shop to find a suitable knife for you.”

Nian Bing eyes lit up. “Let’s go! Teacher, let’s go now!”

Zha Ji pretended to think deeply. “It seemed that someone had said that he was too tired to move before eating. Why do you have the energy to move now?”

Nian Bing chuckled, “Teacher, I know you’re the best! I also don’t need to use much energy. I want to quickly get my precious knife so that I can get familiar with it as soon as possible.”

Zha Zi stood up and said, “You should go and change your clothes

first. If you go out like this, you'll just make a fool of yourself."

"Yes! Yes! I'll go and change now!" Nian Bing's speed was disproportionate to his size as he flew out to change his clothes at the inn they were staying.

When Zha Ji and Nian Bing found the Ice City's main street, the sky had gradually darkened. The afterglow of the sun shone from a far distance, with rosy clouds flowing around it, showing the most beautiful sunset while leaving a little light on the streets.

After walking for while, Nian Bing pointed to a large store not far from them. "Teacher, that should be a weapon shop. Let's go and have a look." There was a sword shaped brand on the door of the weapon shop that was really eye catching. Three big words were written on it, 'Precious Tools Shop'. There were still many customers walking in and out of the shop even though it was the evening. It was obvious that the business was prosperous.

Zha Ji pinched Nian Bing's chubby face. "Idiot, you came to this type of shop to buy a kitchen knife? It won't be a wonder if you get tossed out of the shop."

Nian Bing massaged his chubby little face. "How should I know that? Didn't you say we were seeking a weapon shop?"

Zha Ji walked on. "Just follow me. A weapon shop is a weapon shop, but it isn't what we're looking for." As he said that, he pulled Nian Bing into a small alley. He seemed to be familiar with the place as he brought Nian Bing by several streets and alleys. They

probably used up most of the energy from their meal already. Zha Ji stopped while panting, the sky having turned pitch-black.. He pointed in front of him. “That’s the place!”

Chapter 6.1 – The Ice And Snow Goddess's Sigh

“This... place? Teacher, have you made a mistake?” Nian Bing rubbed his eyes to confirm what he was seeing was what Zha Ji implemented.

Nian Bing's shock wasn't a mystery as in front of them were two paint peeled, run down doors. There was only one handle left on one of the doors. There was also a sign beside it that have vaguely legible words 'Shui Huo Metal Tool's Shop' written askewly on it.

The appearance alone would deter anyone from buying anything from this shop, not mentioning the out of the way location. It was doubtful there were a lot of people that pass by the shop daily. Nian Bing wanted to turn around and walk away after seeing how dilapidated that shop was.

Zha Ji looked at the signboard in front of him and smiled, “Old partner, I've come to see you again. It has been a year since we last met. Are you dead yet?”

Nian Bing said in astonishment, “Teacher, do you know the owner of this shop?”

Zha Ji replied, “Of course I know him. If not, why would I bring you here? Nian Bing, you have to remember that no matter what, you mustn't be fooled by the outward appearance of the receiving party. Except for me, no one knows that in this Shui Huo Metal Tool's Shop, actually hides a crafting expert, even though it looks

run down from the outside. He's a grand master who is the first under the heavens."

"A grand master that is the first under the heavens? Teacher, it can't be that you're just kidding with me, right? If he really is a Grandmaster that's first under the heavens, why would he work at such a place?"

Zha Ji smiled. "Why is that impossible? The Demon Chef can stay in a deserted peach blossom forest, so why can't a godly blacksmith stay in a run down desolate location? Let's go! We'll continue to talk after we enter the shop." As he said that, he pulled Nian Bing towards the entrance. He didn't even knock and just kicked open the run down doors. Peng! Even though the doors looked really run down, they weren't damaged at all by Zha Ji's kick. The doors were opened and exposed a pitch-dark courtyard.

"Little Broken Knife, have you kicked the bucket yet?" Zha Ji shouted.

An aged voice sounded from inside. "I was just wondering exactly who it was that was so rude. So it was you, old devil, that came." A figure staggerly walked out from inside with an oil lamp in his hand. It wasn't necessary to look at his appearance to know he was an elderly, as he gave off an elderly feeling. Nian Bing thought, 'This is the grand master that is first under the heavens? Teacher must have gotten it wrong.'

As Zha Ji pulled Nian Bing into the courtyard, with the light of the oil lamp, Nian Bing could clearly see that it was an old man. He wore a black robe and his body posture stooped a little. His hair

was completely white and his face was full of wrinkles. It looked as though he was ten years older than Zha Ji.

“Old devil, you even brought someone. Who is this chubby fellow?” The black clothed elder looked at Nian Bing as he asked discontentedly.

“Little Broken Knife, this is my recently accepted disciple. I think that you should also find a child to be your successor. If not, are you going to really waste all of the techniques and knowledge that you have accumulated over the years?”

The black clothed old man snorted. “What do you know? I need to see if they have the affinity. Do you think that when wanting a disciple, you can just pick anyone? Looking at your disciple, he looked like he only knows how to eat so he’s suitable for you.”

After hearing what he said, even though Nian Bing was unhappy, it was the chat of his seniors. It wouldn’t be good if he interrupted them. He just looked at his surroundings and found that the small courtyard was quite empty. There wasn’t even any weapon shelf as he had expected. There was only a similarly looking furnace in the corner.

Zha Ji chuckled and said, “You old fella, it has been a few years since we met already, but you still have the same eccentric attitude. Alright! Stop rattling on! You should already know that if I have come here, it would mean that I have a problem.”

The black clothed elder said, “Come inside then.” As he said that,

he led Zha Ji to the rear rooms. After entering the house, Nian Bing suddenly felt a cold feeling pass through his entire body. The Ice and Snow Goddess's Stone inexplicably seemed to have stirred a little restlessly. Nian Bing felt a little dizzy, as in his body, the two magic powers within him moved unstably. He was alarmed. He thought that it must be because he hadn't used his ice power to cancel out the power from the fire magic he had used previously to stabilize the magic power in his body. However, it was inappropriate to use the ice magic now as the magic powers were now in discord as they interacted. He also didn't know how much ice magic to use to even out the two magic powers. He used his will to control the two magic powers and separated them from each other as much as possible. The Heavenly Flower Tile that was given to him by Yu Ru Yan suddenly emitted a tepid airflow that integrated into Nian Bing's body; it had made him feel better as the chaos between the fire and ice magic decreased drastically.

The black-clothed elder used the fire from his oil lamp to light up the lamplight on the table and the room instantly brightened. As they stood outside of the room, they could clearly see that there was an enormous desk in the middle of the room. There also seemed to be a door behind the desk. The black-clothed elder walked behind the desk and rubbed his hands together at Zha Ji. "Take out your money! Take out the money for the value of what you want to obtain."

Zha Ji snappily said, "Little Broken Knife, it has been so many years since we last seen each other, but you still love money so much."

The black-clothed elder snorted and said, "Friends are friends and business is business. Since you can no longer cook any culinary

delicacies, you can only use money to exchange for what you want. Everyone is equal in business.”

Zha Ji walked in front of the desk and leaned towards the black-clothed elder. “Stop being pretentious and make a knife for my precious disciple! If you do that, won’t you be able to eat delicacies?”

The black-clothed elder’s eyes lit up, but very quickly darkened again. “That sounds enticing, but I’m afraid that by the time your disciple becomes a master chef, this old life of mine would have probably ascended to heaven already.”

Zha Ji chuckled and said, “That isn’t definite as you’re still the same after so many years. Since you’re still like this, I think you can live for another ten to twenty years without any complications.”

The black-clothed elder sighed and sighed. “Only my body truly knows my body’s condition. I have offended the heavens too many times in my life. If your disciple can become a master chef within the next ten years, I may still be able to eat his food.”

Zha Ji smiled. “If you die, then you die. Even I don’t know if I can live beyond ten years. Stop talking nonsense and quickly make a knife for my disciple! You can name the price.”

The black-clothed elder glanced at Nian Bing. “I can’t make it.”

Zha Ji frowned a little before asking, “Little Broken Knife, you won’t even give me some face?”

The black-clothed elder snorted. “It isn’t that I don’t want to give you some face. Do you understand? No matter if it is a kitchen knife or blades for killing, it must be suitable for the user. Your fat disciple hasn’t matured yet. His body and hands might change drastically after today. It won’t serve him any purpose if I make a knife for him now, as when he grows up, he won’t be able to use it.”

After Nian Bing heard the black-clothed elder was unwilling to make a knife for him, he became anxious. “How about you just craft a knife according to an adult’s size? I’ll definitely be able to use it then.”

The black-clothed elder looked at him and said, “Such a teacher will have such a disciple. Do you think that I create the knives just like any other mediocre blacksmith? If the knife doesn’t match the user, what use will it have? Your knife is like your undergarment. It must fit you perfectly to display its effectiveness at its greatest. If you buy an unsuitable undergarment, you’ll feel that it becomes comfortable after a while. However, it isn’t because the undergarment was great, but rather, you had just gotten used to it. The suitability that comes from adapting and suitability that occurs instantaneously is as different as the sky and the earth. You have to come back after you reach eighteen years old as your body would have then undergone some changes. Let’s just hope that I haven’t kicked the bucket yet by that time.”

Zha Zi showed signs of thoughts from his eyes. “It looks like I

was careless. Old partner, let's continue this matter in the future then. How about letting me see your weaponry? Have you made any good works lately?"

Chapter 6.2 – Ice And Snow Goddess's Sigh

The black clothed elder said helplessly, “I’ve already aged. Even though skills become more exquisite with experience, my body’s strength has already deteriorated. I no longer have the energy to gather good materials. What good works can I produce? Speaking of which, my most satisfying handiwork in this lifetime of mine is the knife that I had given to you. It was a knife that had been fused with magic. It’s a pity I can only produce that kind of knife once in my lifetime. Since you’re here, you might as well come and have a good look. I won’t mind if you give your fat disciple one of the knives I have in stock.” After saying that, he turned and walked into the room behind the desk.

Zha Ji and Nian Bing walked around the desk and followed the black clothed elder into the backroom. After entering through the door, Nian Bing felt light headed again. The Ice and Snow Goddess’s stone seemed become more and more restless. Nian Bing was unable to bear the cold even though he trained in ice magic. Due to this, Nian Bing subconsciously rubbed the gem beside his chest.

Zha Ji complimented, “Such a strong killing intent, as expected from the world’s best godly blacksmith.”

The black clothed elder walked to the cabinet at the side of the room and opened it. “I’m left with only these seven knives. You can pick any of these knives. I’ll charge you a hundred for it.”

There were seven knives hanging inside the cabinet, all unsheathed. They all had different styles. A dim glow radiated from

the oil lamp into the area underneath it, which gave off a cold aura. The seven knives radiated subtle blue light aura around their edges. They appeared to be really old, but were in fact flawless under a discerning eye. Nian Bing focused greatly on the knife that was on the far left when the cabinet opened. This knife looked the least outstanding among the seven and was the shortest. Under the light of the lamp, it didn't radiate any light. The length of the knife was thirty six centimeters long and its handle measured twelve centimeters. It was entirely black and the flow of its body was streamlined and extremely elegant. The blade itself was straight, but the tip of the blade curved up a little. The blade was five centimeters wide and the back of the knife looked thick. The reason why Nian Bing was really attracted to it was because of the feeling that it gave off; a feeling as though this knife should be his. The Ice and Snow Goddess's stone shook violently as if calling out to something.

Nian Bing walked, as though he was in a trance, toward the cabinet. Just as Zha Ji wanted to stop him, the black clothed elder said, "It's his knife. Let him choose it himself. En, this child's knife attribute is actually not bad. He has already made his choice." Saying that, he suddenly gasped, as he saw Nian Bing reaching out to grasp the knife on the far left.

Zha Ji was clear that all seven knives had their pros and cons. Under the condition that the prices for all of them were the same, the key point was choosing the knife. As he saw that his disciple had actually picked the least outstanding knife, he scolded him in his heart. He turned and looked at the black clothed elder. He thought that this old friend would currently be sniggering at his misfortune, but when he saw the black clothed elder's expression, he was stunned. The black clothed elder had his eyes wide open as he looked at Nian Bing's hand. His lips were quivering, as though

he wanted to say something but didn't know how to.

Nian Bing wasn't tall so he held the tip of the blade and flicked it to bring the hardly impressive short knife down. When the knife was in his hand, he suddenly felt a cool very soothing feeling, but in contrast, his internal magic power seemed to surge violently. He held the handle of the knife and looked at it in detail. There was only a rhombus shaped hole on the handle. Nian Bing could clearly feel that his ice magic had merged with the blade once he held the handle. The knife seemed to have become an extension of his left arm. The ice magic had naturally flowed into the knife without him willing it. A light blue ray instantly shone out from its blade.

“Teacher, I want this knife.” Nian Bing brandished the short knife, an act which brought out a faint blue light ray that chilled the temperature of the room by several degrees.

Zha Ji looked at the light radiating from the knife and thought back to the previous expression the black clothed elder had. He laughed and said, “You fat boy, it seems that you have hit the mark by a fluke. Little Broken Knife, we want that knife.”

The black clothed elder looked at Nian Bing in astonishment. He suddenly moved in a flash. He was as fast like a bolt of lightning. In the blink of an eye, he appeared in front of Nian Bing and reached out his hand to grab the short knife.

Nian Bing was startled, instinctively turning the knife in his left hand and striking towards the black clothed elder. It gave off an ice cold feeling, but the left hand wasn't the right hand that had been trained for a long time. He felt his hand lighten as the knife fell

into the black clothed elder's hand. Nian Bing blankly asked, "Elder, what are you doing?"

Zha Ji walked to Nian Bing's side and held onto his shoulder. "Little Broken Knife, it can't be that you can't bear to part with it, right? Just what is this knife?"

The black clothed elder gently caressed the body of the knife and sighed, "I would never have thought that your fat disciple would choose this knife. This knife is the worst in quality among the seven knives."

Zha Ji frowned, "The knife had radiated light. How can it be lousy? If you don't want to part with it, then forget it. I won't force your hand."

The black clothed elder unhappily said, "Do you really think that I can't bear to part with it? I have never gone back on my words since I, Hua Tian, reached the peak of being the godly blacksmith. Since I had said to let you choose whichever you want, what you pick is yours. This knife is really the worst amongst the seven knives. It also wasn't crafted by me. The reason it radiated light must be because of your disciple. If I haven't guessed wrongly, your disciple should be training in ice magic. If not, the knife would not have emitted any light at all. Old Devil! I never thought that you would actually cultivate a magician as your successor."

Zha Ji laughed and said, "It's fated. If it's lacking, so be it. You had said that Nian Bing is still too young, so we can just change it in the future anyway."

The black clothed elder replied, “I haven’t finished what I wanted to say. Even though the knife is the lousiest among the seven knives, it can be also be said that it’s the best amongst the seven. Even I can’t clearly understand the nature of this knife. I initially bought this icy knife from a scholar who was in dire straits and had spent only a gold coin on it. This knife was made from special materials. It is very tough and durable, but the most peculiar thing about it is that it has an icy nature. If it comes in contact with ice magic or ice energy, it will emit light. However, do you know why I said that it is the lousiest? It is because it doesn’t have a soul.”

“Doesn’t have a soul?” Zha Ji and Nian Bing asked simultaneously with their eyes filled with curiosity.

The black clothed elder, Hua Tian, replied, “That’s right! This knife doesn’t have a soul. Little Fatty, do you know how old I am today?”

Nian Bing was initially waiting for the black clothed elder to explain, only to hear him change the topic. He subconsciously replied, “You? You should be slightly older than my teacher.”

Hua Tian broke into laughter, “Little Fatty, you are really generous. If it were others, I’m afraid they would say I’m at least ten years older than your teacher. Actually, I’m younger than your teacher by three years. I have trained in Dou Qi since a young age. Under normal circumstances, I should have aged slower than others, but I have aged twenty years more than my actual age. Why is that the case? It is because as I crafted weapons, I had put

in my spirit as the blood essence of the weapon, which had in turn caused a detrimental impact on my soul, and so, I turned out like this. This ice knife doesn't have the blood essence in it that gives it a soul. A knife without a soul could never become the best quality knife, no matter how great the materials used in crafting it are. Thus, even if the materials are the best, the quality will still be the lousiest."

Zha Ji replied, "With your skills, you should be able to modify it. Won't adding some spirit to it make it the highest quality knife?"

Hua Tian bitterly smiled, "If you thought about that, how could I not have? I have already tried several times. I even used the Nine Heaven Rebelling Flames, but was still unable to smelt down the knife. How can I modify it that way? Even with my knowledge of metals, I still can't figure out what it is made of so I just kept it. If it doesn't have a soul, it shouldn't matter as you're only using it as a kitchen knife. The knife is able to cut metals as though they were mud so it is useful for cutting vegetables, but you have to be careful not to cut through the chopping board." As he said that, he returned the knife back to Nian Bing.

When Nian Bing took the knife, he felt it become completely fused with his body again. "Senior, is there really no way to give it a soul?"

Hua Tian replied, "There are ways, but that is only if we can find a gemstone, that is spiritually nurtured, to be placed in the hole of the knife's handle. The gem can act as the soul of the knife, so it isn't impossible, and the effect will be even greater. However, if the gemstone is of a low quality and placed in the knife, it will only

worsen the knife instead.”

Nian Bing’s heart was moved. The Ice and Snow Goddess’s stone, wasn’t it also rhombus in shape? The size also looked as though it would fit the hole of the knife’s handle. After thinking for a moment, he took the Ice and Snow Goddess’s stone out and asked, “Senior, do you think this gemstone is suitable?” The entire room was lit up in a blue glow. The ice knife made a soft ‘Ting’ sound, as though it was alive, and vibrated in Nian Bing’s hand. Even though the Ice and Snow Goddess’s stone had glowed in the past, it usually wasn’t as intense as today’s. Both the gemstone and the knife simultaneously glowed brilliantly as though they were crying out to each other.

Chapter 6.3 – Ice And Snow Goddess's Sigh

“This... Thisss...” Hua Tian showed an excited expression. He took the Ice and Snow Goddess's stone and felt the intense cold it emitted. He couldn't help but exclaim, “This is an extremely high grade ice gemstone! Little Fatty, where did you get this from?”

Nian Bing glanced at Zha Ji before saying, “I have always had it with me, but I don't know where it comes from.”

Zha Ji looked at him, slightly astonished. “It was always on you? How come I haven't heard about that from you?”

Nian Bing replied, “Teacher, all I know is that my training speed, while practicing magic, is faster when when I use this gemstone. You also haven't asked me about it, so I never told you. Senior, is it suitable to be embedded in the knife?”

Hua Tian gradually closed his eyes to sense the surge of spiritual nature emitted by the Ice and Snow Goddess's stone. His voice wavered a little as he said, “Yes, it is definitely suitable. The fact that they had called out to each other proves that they are suitable. God! Do you really want to help me accomplish my goal by giving me such a good material? I can finally craft a knife that will be able to seize the heavens. To think that I, Hua Tian, am about to craft such a knife. I have long awaited for this day to come. You two, follow me!”

Hua Tian's body figure flashed as he dashed out of the room. Zha Ji glanced at Nian Bing only to find that Nian Bing was staring at

him, at a loss of what to do. “Let’s go! It looks like your luck is not bad.”

When they arrived at the courtyard, they had found that the furnace that was sitting at the corner had been moved to the center of the courtyard. It was unclear of where Hua Tian had taken out a bellow from, but that was now connected to the furnace. He held a bag that contained some powder like substance, adding it to the furnace. Hua Tian looked at Nian Bing and said, “Fatty, you come and help me pull the bellows. Even though the Nine Heavenly Flames is unable to smelt the ice knife, it is still able to soften it and that will be the time to embed the gemstone in it. Nine Flames Dou Qi, arise!” Hua Tian’s entire body emitted a very strong heat energy. It was lucky that Nian Bing was at the opposite side of the furnace. So, he was unable to feel the heat flowing from Hua Tian’s body which radiated a subtle red aura. He pointed in front of him and a red light ray instantly shot into the furnace. A blinding white flame erupted, and covered the entire courtyard.

“Pull the bellows!” Hua Tian shouted as he held the blade of the knife in his left hand while placing the knife’s handle into the furnace. His right hand remained opposite of the furnace, at a distance, and was inserting the scorching hot Nine Flames Dou Qi into the furnace continuously.

This was the first time that Nian Bing saw Dou Qi. His interest in it increased drastically. As he used his strength to pull the bellows, he watched Hua Tian’s actions.

The working of that furnace was a mystery, as even though the flame in the furnace was extremely high in temperature, the

surroundings didn't heat up too much. The white flame then gradually changed into a green flame. The ice knife's handle however retained its original colour and looked as though it hadn't been changed at all. Beads of perspiration appeared on Hua Tian's forehead. The red aura that surrounded his body also gradually turned green. The flame in the furnace became increasingly green as time passed. When the Dou Qi surrounding Hua Tian's body became thoroughly green, the flame had darkened further. As the odd, dark green flames licked along the ice knife, it began to slowly change, gradually turning red. The flame moved from the end of the knife's handle to the hole in the handle. Even the heat surrounding the hole was under the control of Hua Tian.

“As blood is its essence, Nine Heavenly Fires!” Hua Tian spat a mouthful of fresh blood into the furnace. The dark green flame abruptly became a moderate red flame before the fire rose up again. At that moment, the entire handle of the knife had similarly become as red as the flames. When Hua Tian's hand trembled a little, the Ice and Snow Goddess's stone shot out like lightning and neatly entered the hole. A ‘Pu’ sound was emitted from the softened handle of the knife as steam was released from it. The entire flame in the furnace instantly dimmed and emitted a teal coloured flame while a dense cloud of smoke rose up towards the sky.

Hua Tian held the tip of the knife and suddenly moved to Nian Bing's side using his left hand to pull Nian Bing up. His body's Nine Flames Dou Qi had already been withdrawn. He used his left hand to pull Nian Bing up who was on the ground. Nian Bing only felt a strong power and his wrist warmed up as though something was flowing out of it. Zha Ji had clearly seen from the side how Hua Tian had cut open a vein on Nian Bing's wrist with his nails and shot his blood into the Ice and Snow Goddess's stone which was

rapidly being absorbed as the stone was perfectly embedded into the handle of the knife. The red tint of the handle disappeared. The ice knife changed into a teal colour from its original black colour. The colour was elegant, like water. Coldness emitted from it. The ray from the knife shot towards the sky until it reached the nine heavens. At that moment, the sky lit up. Though it was only for a short period of time, it had represented the birth of a peerless treasured knife.

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At the Ice Snow City's Warrior Association Branch, a magnificently dressed old man was standing upside down on his hands while his body was as stable as a boulder. A sword hung from his waist but his eyes looked like two cold stars as he gazed into the far distance, as though he was in deep thought. At that moment, he was astonished to see a teal coloured ray shooting into the sky. He was alarmed as that teal ray, containing a faint red line, gave off an ice-cold aura. When he scouted around to try and spot the light ray again, he found that it had disappeared. He took in a mouthful of cool air and said, "The blood light ray signifying the birth of a legendary weapon? It can't be that the entire continent will become chaotic?"

The green shark leather sheath of the long sword at his waist buzzed a little before it calmed down again. The magnificently dressed old man patted his sword, "Old partner, it seems like you are scared of something. Is that really the birth of a legendary weapon? It could actually frighten you. With you and I together, as a Martial Saint, it can't be that even we should be fearful of a legendary weapon, right? Even if it is a legendary weapon, we still need to see who is the one wielding it is!"

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Ice God Tower.

With a ten meter blue hexagram as its center, a blue light rose up. A woman with snow white hair abruptly opened her eyes. Even though her hair was as white as snow, her exquisitely beautiful face looked like a girl of sixteen years old. A cold aura emitted from her blue eyes. She wore a white, ridged long gown that showed her honorable position. As she waved her right hand, a transparent crystal ball appeared in her hand. “This is the goddess’s cry. Could it be that the pagoda’s gemstone had not been lost in the Azure River? Using the name of the Ice and Snow Goddess, draw the goddess’s life force!”

White light emitted from the crystal ball and it showed a mist that suddenly became teal in colour. ‘Ting’, the woman’s hand trembled and the crystal ball unexpectedly broke to pieces in front of her. “Such a strong life force, it is definitely the Ice and Snow Goddess’s stone. Humph, attend to me!” Although her voice wasn’t loud, it had a terrifying fluctuation that could petrify others. The enormous door was pushed open and two women wearing long white robes walked in. They looked to be sixty to seventy years of age and their faces were lined with wrinkles.

“Honorable high priestess of the Ice and Snow Goddess, what orders do you have?”

The white haired maiden’s body levitated as she flatly said, “I felt

the position of the Ice and Snow Goddess's stone. Immediately send out the twelve other priests to retrieve the gemstone and the team must be personally led by you two. The dignity of the goddess must not be blasphemed by humans.”

“We understand, honorable high priestess of the Ice and Snow Goddess.” The two old women bowed and withdrew from the room. A cold aura emitted from the eyes of the high priestess of the Ice and Snow Goddess and her entire body gave off a blue aura. “Ling Er, was it worth the trouble? Was love really that important to you? With your capability, if you had accepted my tutelage, within twenty years, the Descended God Master position would have been yours. Was it really worth the trouble?” She sighed and the surrounding atmosphere seemed to have moved. A thick thirty three centimetre ice was actually formed on the surface of the inner walls of the room.

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At the Shui Huo weapon shop, Hua Tian sat on the ground and inhaled deeply to regain his breath. His face was deathly white and was obviously very exhausted, but his turbid old eyes showed excitement and happiness as he looked at the white mist surrounding the short knife that had formed droplets. His voice quivered as he said, “Success! I have succeeded! White dew of the limpid autumn waters. It's a peerless treasured knife. I had never thought that the ice stone's power will be this strong. I have finally crafted a peerless treasured knife. I have finally caught up with the legendary blacksmiths of the past. Hahahahahaha!”

Nian Bing rubbed his wrist and muttered, “Gentle water, please

use your gentle smile to cure the injury, recovery spell!” A faint blue light caressed and healed the wound on his wrist. Even though there was still a scar, the bleeding had stopped. The recovery spell that required water wasn’t difficult for Nian Bing as ice and water came from the same source.

Hua Tian shuddered as he stood up and looked at the knife in his hand and looked at Nian Bing. “Fatty, I had used your blood as the source to radiate the first light of the knife. You will be the only one who can use its full power from today onwards. You must treat this knife kindly. To be honest, I really can’t bear to give this knife to you. To use this godly knife as a kitchen knife, really covers the pearl in dirt.”

Zha Ji laughed, “To be covered in dirt? Isn’t the gemstone from my disciple? Without the gemstone, no matter how capable you are, you won’t be able to create such a good knife. Stop talking nonsense! It’s a hundred purple gold coin, right? I will give you that!” As he said that, he took out a coin purse and tossed it at Hua Tian.

Hua Tian sighed, but returned the coin purse to Zha Ji. “How can the birth of such a precious knife be tainted by the stinky copper. This time, you have really gotten it cheap. However, I should suggest that your disciple cover the handle of the knife so that the gemstone won’t be exposed. An ignorant man is innocent, but treasuring a jade ring will become a crime. If someone steals the knife, then I would have worked so hard for nothing.”

Chapter 7.1 – Fusion Of Ice And Fire

Zha Ji walked in front of Hua Tian, took the precious ice-cold knife and gave it to Nian Bing. “We won’t be courteous then. However, don’t you have a sheath to go with the knife?”

Hua Tian looked at the knife for a while as if reluctant to part with it before he turned to walk back into the house. As he came back out he tossed a rusty sheath at Nian Bing. “This sheath was made using cold steel. After specially enhancing it, the sheath is compatible with the icy blade. When you insert the knife into the sheath, the blade will not touch the sheath at all. This sheath also has the ability to hide the icy nature of the blade. It looks like this time I really made a huge loss.”

Nian Bing inserted the Knife into the sheath. The teal aura emitting from it decreased and the coldness had disappeared. The Ice and Snow Goddess’s stone shone a blue light as per usual. After looking at the knife in his hand, Nian Bing respectfully bowed deeply towards Hua Tian. “Thank you senior for giving me this knife. Senior, since this knife is different after it had the gemstone embedded in it, please give the knife a name.”

A dim radiance glimmered from Hua Tian’s eyes. “Pure dew from limpid autumn waters, chilling the sky and freezing the earth. Let’s call it, Morning Dew Knife.”

Zha Ji praised, “Morning Dew? That’s a great name!”

Nian Bing gripped Morning Dew tightly. He thought, ‘Mom, I

placed the Ice and Snow Goddess's stone that you had given to me in this knife. Will you blame me? I remembered that when you were leaving, you sighed. This knife also uses the Ice and Snow Goddess's stone as its spirit. Let's call it the Ice and Snow Goddess's Sigh. Ice and Snow Goddess's Sigh—Morning Dew Knife.' Just like that, a peerless treasured knife had appeared in the world.

Hua Tian looked exhaustedly towards Zha Ji. "You should head back already. After that light ray emitted into the sky, it should have attracted the attention of martial artists. You must be careful when heading back. However, a kitchen knife? It is really lamentable for such a precious knife to be used as a kitchen knife. Damn it!" Hua Tian shouted his dissatisfaction before staggering back to his dark house.

Zha Ji pulled on Nian Bing's little hand as he found that what Broken Knife said was right. "Let's go! Let's not attract more attention. You really reaped a huge profit today." As he said that, he tore a portion of his clothing to wrap it around the handle of the knife. After covering the radiance from the Ice and Snow Goddess's stone, he gave the knife back to Nian Bing and pulled him along as he walked briskly away.

Most of the people in the Ice and Snow City had turned in for the night already. The streets were a little chilly. As they walked, Nian Bing whispered to Zha Ji, "Teacher, does Senior Hua Tian practice martial arts?"

Zha Ji smiled. "You can say that he does, but can also say that he doesn't. Even though he practices Dou Qi, he doesn't know any

martial art techniques. With his Nine Leaving Dou Qi, he should have already reached the level of a great sword master and can also possibly reach the Martial Saint realm; without knowing any martial techniques. His Nine Leaving Dou Qi came purely from his training. You have already seen that the fire from Dou Qi is of the best quality. So what could be a more suitable way in using it, other than to craft weapons?”

“Teacher, is it impossible to use Dou Qi for cooking? There should be different types of Dou Qi!” Nian Bing asked curiously.

Zha Ji shook his head in disagreement. “The power of the Dou Qi is too overbearing, particularly because of its explosive nature. However with magic, we can control it as we please. Let’s stop talking for now and continue after returning to the inn. We will head back to Peach Blossom Forest early in the morning tomorrow. On our journey back, don’t ever remove the knife from its sheath. If someone saw it, we won’t be able to protect your precious knife.”

After they got back to the hotel, it was already late in the night. Zha Ji was already exhausted after walking for an entire day. After sending Nian Bing to his room, he went to his own room to rest for the night.

Although Nian Bing was tired, he had acquired a new treasure. With a youngster’s temperament, he didn’t feel like sleeping. He took Morning Dew knife out to play. If it weren’t for Zha Ji’s warning, he would definitely have taken the knife out of its sheath to see its teal aura. A loud snoring from next door was heard. It was obvious that Zha Ji had fallen asleep. Nian Bing struck out his

tongue and muttered, “I’m lucky that I am in a separate room. If not, I won’t be able to sleep at night as teacher’s snores are really loud.”

As Nian Bing hugged the Ice and Snow Goddess’s Sigh, he gradually closed his eyes and started his daily practice, meditation. After a moment, he had already entered a meditative state. Nian Bing’s spiritual power slowly drew fire and ice elements toward his body to condense. It seemed that he was really exhausted today and was too jubilant after getting the Morning Dew knife. It had made him forget that his ice and fire magic powers were already very unstable and weren’t under much control. The magic elements just naturally gathered towards his body.

As always, the Ice and Snow Goddess’s stone and Flame God’s stone helped Nian Bing to accelerate the rate at which he condensed magic elements. He had quickly recovered the magic power that he had used during the day. However, at this moment, both the ice and fire magic elements started to subtly fight against each other. Nian Bing had continuously used this two best quality gemstones to help him daily for a year. This had made his magic power to accumulate to an extent that it inevitably led to a change in his magic power. If it was ordinary magicians, when they continued to train, their power would break through to a higher level. However, Nian Bing was different as he had two magic elements that countered each other. The two magic power had already reached a bottleneck. Special changes had occurred in Nian Bing’s body as the two elements filled half of Nian Bing’s body respectively and had started to fight against each other for more space in his body. The ice magic power attacked from the left side of his body to the right and likewise the same with the fire magic power to his left. Under the gradually increasing power between the two magics, there was an obvious change happening to Nian

Bing's body. The center of his body became a dividing line with the left side of his body becoming blue while the right side was red. The two auras unceasingly surged against each other. Because of the battle between the magics becoming increasingly violent, Nian Bing was woken up from his sleep when he felt that both sides of his body had become intensely cold and hot, which had caused acute stimulations to be sent throughout his body.

After Nian Bing woke up, he immediately found that something was wrong with his body. As of this moment, regardless of whether it was the ice or fire magic powers, they had reached a never before seen level of chaotic interaction. The two magic powers fought against each other and neither yielded. The Ice and Snow Goddess's stone and the Flame God's stone simultaneously let out a faint aura and poured their accumulated magic power into Nian Bing's body. It seemed as though they were aiding their own magic elements to overwhelm the other.

The conflict between the ice and fire elements had put Nian Bing's body into a state of continuous intense pain and caused Nian Bing's body to constantly spasm. The situation was totally out of his control. He wanted to scream out, but found that he couldn't even open his mouth. He could only helplessly watch his body suddenly turning red and blue as the magic powers' conflict continued unceasingly. As the battle between the two magic powers became increasingly chaotic, the left side of Nian Bing's body became covered in ice while the right side of his body became so scalding hot that his clothes were burnt off, leaving a faint smell of scorched clothes.

As the intensely cold and hot magic powers fought, Nian Bing's consciousness gradually became hazy. He thought of his father, he

thought of his mother and thought of all that had happened at the Ice God's Pagoda.

“Mother, Father, am I going to die? I am going to die, but I don't want to. Father, didn't you say that ice and fire doesn't completely counter each other? Why am I suffering so much then? You were fire and Mom was water. You could get together, but why can't both my magic powers do the same? Father, Mother, please teach your son what he should do right now?”

A human's physique was predetermined when they were born. If their heredity was different from their parents, their body's attribute would also be different. The suitability to train in a particular magic or Dou Qi depended upon the attribute which their body had. If a fire attribute person wanted to learn ice magic or ice Dou Qi, it would be impossible. Even if they tried to train harder, it would be useless. There would only be a small accomplishment even if that person used his entire life to train in it. However, Nian Bing could use the two magic powers because he had the Ice and Snow Goddess stone and Flame God's stone that his parents had given him. Under the influence of the stones, it became impossible to know the attribute he was born with. In normal cases, if the husband's and wife's attributes were different, their child would inherit only one of their attributes.

However, Nian Bing's parents' attributes were extremely strong. It could be said that they were two extreme attributes, so when Nian Bing was born, he had two attributes and became a dual attribute person. Not even a single person among millions could be found to have dual attributes. If the two attributes didn't counter each other and were simultaneously trained to the point where the person became a dual attribute magician, he would become well

known in the world. However, Nian Bing's dual attributes just happened to counter each other. The ice and fire magic elements viewed each other as rivals. Nian Bing had tried to train the two countering magics by trial and error as he didn't have anyone to teach him in that year. Initially, he was able to balance the powers as his magic powers weren't strong; so it didn't cause any problem. However, after a year of training under the help of the two best quality gemstones, his magic powers had met a bottleneck. Thus, it resulted in his magic powers being unbalanced during the day. It was a sign that it would gradually lead to the current situation of the battle between the ice and the fire elements.

Chapter 7.2 – Fusion Of Ice And Fire

An ordinary person would have already died from the breakage of their internal channels due to the fire and ice elements that wreaked havoc in the body. Nian Bing was in a severely dangerous state, even though he had dual attributes. If he made a mistake, he might either freeze or burn to death.

The spasms of Nian Bing's body became increasingly violent as red and blue aura continuously stimulated his body alternately. Nian Bing's pores gradually exuded blood due to the tremendously painful stimulations to his meridian channels.

The Ice and Snow Goddess's stone and the Flame God's stone seemed to be thrown into a state of frenzy as his body's condition progressed. As the ice and fire elements frantically collided with each other at a crazy rate, it resulted in the two different magic becoming increasingly intense. Suddenly, as Nian Bing's life was about to end, a warm green aura permeated out from his chest. It simultaneously fused with the two ice and fire magic powers. Nian Bing's body was no longer half blue and half red at this moment. The ice and fire magic had already circulated through his entire body during the progression of their battle; which resulted in a mixture of the two magic powers in his body. Nian Bing shouted out as the gentle green aura mixed with his two magic powers. The ice and fire elements unexpectedly slowed down under the effect of the fusion with the green aura. The two elements weren't as violent as before. Nian Bing took it as an opportunity to hastily try and control the two countering magic. He was astonished to find that all of the magic elements in his body started to fuse with the green aura as it circulated throughout his body. Even though the rate of fusion was very slow, the process was already unstoppable.

The green aura only remained for a short while before disappearing. The pain from the cold and hot stimulations disappeared after the magic power in Nian Bing's body underwent that bizarre state. As the two ice and fire elements circulated, they reach a marvelous fusion state. The ice and fire elements seemed to be completely separated from each other, but also seemed to be completely bonded together as they slowly circulated. As the battle between them gradually weakened, the scattered magic powers gradually gathered into a beautiful vortex that revolved in circles of blue and red colour. The Ice and Snow Goddess's stone and the Flame God's stone still inserted forces into their respective elements, like how they did previously. The vortex of elements wasn't large. As the two magic powers gathered, the two auras slowly became sparkling and translucent.

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Rong Tian smiled as he caressed his son's head. "Ice can extinguish fire. However when the fire reaches a certain degree, it can equivalently extinguish ice, mutually subduing one another. The water and the fire relationship is the closest among the four basic magic elements. Ice is also the same as they are filled with liveliness. There was once a senior magician stated that when fire and water reaches a certain phase, they can become interchangeable. There is nothing absolute in the world. If the elements power are the same between the ice and fire elements, they will only have a fine distinction between them. That statement had once influenced the magic world greatly. There was a minority that agreed with that, but the majority objected. I was initially on the opposing side. However, after I met with your Mother, I found out that that statement of the interaction between ice and fire isn't completely impossible. Since I am a fire magician,

my knowledge about ice was negligible so it was impossible for me to change my flames to ice. If your mother wasn't taken away, we might have been able to gain some time to research more on the relationships of water and fire and slowly discover the true fusion of ice and fire."

The young Nian Bing asked curiously, "Father, what happens when water and fire fuses and how did you find that out?"

Rong Tian awkwardly coughed twice as a cover as to why his face flushed red. He replied Nian Bing, "You're still too young. When you have grown up, Father will then tell you about it."

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'Water and fire are the most closely related magic elements. Could it be the situation I am in now is the water and fire fusion that Father had once told me? Ice and water come from the same source. Could it be ice and fire can also be from the same source?' Nian Bing was unadapted to the major differences in his body, but he fully understands that he must maintain this state in order to let the ice and fire magic elements to continue revolving. That way, he won't self destruct from the battle between the magic elements.

This was the first time that Nian Bing's body had a human's regular temperature for this entire year. His body no longer felt half cold and half hot. The gentle and warm feeling made him enter a meditative state again. He let go of his consciousness in his comfort. He didn't know that from this time onwards, he had become the only magician of dual elements of fire and ice, gaining

some benefits from his sufferings. Even though he was still in the initial stage of fusing his dual magic, it had already made his magic unusual and no longer comparable to any other ordinary magicians.

When the first ray of light entered the room from the window at dawn, Nian Bing gradually woke from his meditative state. The two distinctive magic powers had disappeared in his body instead it had formed into a fist sized red and blue vortex instead. The two different magic powers' aura mutually intersected with each other but didn't encroach on each other at all as they slowly revolved. The sparkling and translucent blue and red auras looked magnificent, Nian Bing could clearly feel that his perceptions in his magic elements were much stronger than before. He rubbed on the jade tablet that hung in his chest before muttering, "Aunty, thank you! If it wasn't for this Heavenly Flower Tile that helped to stabilize my magic powers, I'm afraid... Nian Bing will definitely pay you back this favour in the future." The green aura previously was from that Heavenly Flower Tile that shone when he was in a dangerous state. Blue fields on a warm day, mist rises from the jade. This jade tile had been jaded using the fat of goats. It was more effective than I thought. After a light flashed passed Nian Bing's eye, he raised the Morning Dew Knife in his hand before he lightly chanted, "Ice elements! I plead for you to gather to form a huge and sharp blade to cut through the restraints and chains of the world!"

A blue aura shone from the Ice and Snow Goddess's stone. It was clear that ice elements were gathering to form a shape. A solid blue icy blade appeared in front of him while the vortex in his body continuously revolved. The formation of the icy blade didn't affect it at all nor was there any feelings of reduction in the ice magic power. It just continued to revolve in a steady state.

Nian Bing's heart beat rapidly. He subconsciously rubbed on the Flame God's stone before chanting again, "Fire elements! I plead for you to gather to form a huge and sharp blade to cut through the binding chains of the world!"

The aura of the flame had substituted the blue aura of the icy blade and a solid flaming blade appeared in front of him as the radiance of the blade flickered. Similarly for his right hand, there was no longer any separation between the ice and fire magic powers. Nian Bing's heart trembled as the fusion of the ice and fire had finally allowed him to fully use the two countering magic powers. After the radiance of the knives flashed, the icy blade and flame blade collided in mid air under his spiritual control. 'Chi!' The two magic simultaneously disappeared after some water vapours was produced. "I've succeeded! That's great! I can finally use two magic powers." Nian Bing excitedly jumped out of his bed. The fusion of the ice and fire magic had given him a unique power.

Zha Ji's voice sounded from outside the room after he knocked on the door, "Why are you hollering so early in the morning? Open up!"

Nian Bing hastily hid the Flame God's stone before opening the door. When Zha Ji first saw him, he immediately pinched his nose. "It's so smelly in here. You brat! Did you crap in the room?"

Nian Bing was stunned and lowered his head to look at himself. He then realised that his body had unknowingly become sticky. His clothes was also stained by sticky matters; making him felt extremely uncomfortable.

Zha Ji sized up Nian Bing. He was startled to find out that in a single night, Nian Bing seemed to have grown taller. The greatest change of his body was his eyes. His originally childish eyes actually looked much more abstruse. It felt as though it was a **. Most of all, his eyes were radiant like a pair of gems, giving him an extraordinary feeling.

“Nian Bing, what happened last night?” Zha Ji asked in astonishment.

Nian Bing scratched his head, before replying, “It seems that my magic had made a breakthrough to the next level. I don’t know why I am perspiring this much though.” He definitely didn’t know about this as when the ice and fire battled violently, it had forced all of his impurities out of his body. This resulted in him shedding his mortal body and exchanging his bone, causing many changes to his body.

Chapter 7.3 – Fusion Of Ice And Fire

Zha Ji frowned and wrinkled his brow, “I don’t understand, but improvements are always welcome. Give yourself a quick wash, and then we will return to Peach Blossom Forest. Leave those clothes you’re wearing. I can see that washing them won’t do much.”

Nian Bing agreed at once and turned around to return to his room’s bathroom to wash himself. After looking at Nian Bing’s chubby figure, Zha Ji displayed a somewhat thoughtful expression and sighed, saying, “Everything happens according to fate.”

Pulling the wood cart, Nian Bing followed at Zha Ji’s side, slowly walking to the city’s exterior. The day’s weather was exceptionally sunny and there was not a cloud to be seen in the pure blue sky for thousands of miles. They felt particularly comfortable, with the refreshing morning breeze continuously brushing against them.

Just as they reached the northern city gate, the sound of horses’ hooves could suddenly be heard from outside the city gate. The Ice Moon Empire Soldiers guarding the city stood in an orderly arrangement on either side. Amongst them were also people that were on the street who were preparing to exit and enter the city that had hurriedly stepped aside.

Three carriages quickly entered the city. The carriages were white, embedded with a large silver six pointed star on either side. At the center of the six pointed star was a meticulously crafted ice flower. Seeing such a symbol, the commoners of Ice Snow City could not help but feel deep veneration toward the carriages, so

much so that even a few had saluted the carriage. Of course, Zha Ji and Nian Bing were not among them.

Nian Bing could not be more familiar with the symbol of the ice flower. As he clenched his fists tightly, his eyes displayed an aura of intense hatred. It was them. They were the ones that had robbed him of his happiness!

The chariots quickly galloped past. Zha Ji coughed, signaling them to continue. Nian Bing's expression was like a pine tree. He said to himself, 'Currently the difference between our powers is too great. Patience, I must have patience.'

Although the road from Ice Snow City to Peach Blossom Forest could not be regarded as far, but as they were going by foot, they did not reach their wooden home until noon. After handling what they had purchased and brought back, Zha Ji had Nian Bing return to his room and rest. Tomorrow, he would resume the study of the culinary arts. Nian Bing had just entered the realm of the fire and ice origin, yet he still wanted to meditate more in order to increase his own magic power. After eating Zha Ji's deliciously prepared lunch, he returned to his room to rest.

Days passed by. Nian Bing gradually grew under the instruction of Zha Ji. From the day after he had returned from Ice and Snow city, he had understood why Zha Ji had originally said those words to him. In order to learn the culinary arts well, he must experience fatness from thinness, and then the process of thinness from fatness. Naturally, if he were to sample Zha Ji's food everyday, he would be able to differentiate many of these food's flavors and receive great amounts of nourishment, naturally turning into a

small fatty. In comparison, the process of thinness from fatness was relatively painful. Zha Ji's method was quite simple. He would have Nian Bing take responsibility of making his own meals everyday. Whatever one cooked would be what one would eat. He would simply give his morning lecture and provide him with a bit of guidance. He wanted Nian Bing to slowly figure the rest by himself. Thus in a year, Nian Bing would become thin and again change back into that originally delicate and refined youngster. What kind of smell could the food cooked by a novice produce? It is perhaps impossible for anyone to not lose weight after having tasted delicious food and then having tasted the food that a novice produced; it would be truly difficult to swallow.

Two years of time had given Nian Bing a solid foundation. From the start of his third year, he had already entered the formal process of learning the culinary skill. What Zha Ji demanded of him was exceptionally strict. Practice everyday would always leave Nian Bing utterly exhausted. Nightly meditations would be his greatest rest. Not only could he recover from his tiredness, during the process of meditation and learning culinary skill, his spiritual power progressed not one bit slower than his magic power. The greater the time spent learning, the more mystical Nian Bing's display of culinary skill became. Zha Ji's mind actually stored all methods of cooking, like a deep and immeasurable ocean. Nian Bing appeared to have already forgotten his hatred, and was wholeheartedly absorbed in learning culinary skills. Under Zha Ji's guidance, his understanding gradually grew, and he became capable of frequently proposing a few novel opinions and was engaging Zha Ji in deep discussions of a mutual level. At last, in the fifth year, Nian Bing was already no longer completely learning from Zha Ji, but rather was discussing with Zha Ji, gradually combining magic and culinary skill. Like this, not only could he promote his culinary skill, but this was also the best method of practicing his control of magic power. All of the magic fused with

his cooking to repeatedly create gourmet dishes, and attached to his body were the inherited Demon Chef's skills.

“Master, what do you want to eat at noon today? Recently your body's condition has not been the best. I'll catch two fish so I can make soup. A few days ago, I researched a bright flame fish soup that will certainly spark your appetite.” After Nian Bing completed the day's required firewood practice, he arrived at the door of Zha Ji's room to inquire about it.

Zha Ji sat at the desk chair in his room. His wrinkles were much deeper compared to a few years ago. “Nian Bing, come in and sit down. Master has a few words to speak to you.”

Nian Bing stared blankly for a moment. He walked into the room with large strides and pulled a chair and sat next to Zha Ji. “Master, what's going on with you today? My skill in wood knife slicing has already reached great success, you don't want to see? I should cook you a meal. Your stomach isn't good. If you don't regularly eat on time, your old stomach problems will probably come back.”

Zha Ji looked at Nian Bing's deeply concerned gaze and smiled saying, “Eight years ago, you came to me, here, eight years ago. In eight years of time, you grew up from a child to an elegant youngster. Master also doesn't have much left to teach you. With your present skill, you already reached the realm of the student surpassing the teacher. Foolish boy, your master had been deceiving you all along. Wood knife slicing, so long as you can accomplish the realm of even slices, you already achieved great success. Fundamentally, you need not achieve false suspense or

stillness, neither wire length cuts continuously. Your knife work has already far surpassed the realm of the peak years of your teacher. I did not expect that you would be able to go as far as to truly accomplish a few theories born out of passing thoughts. It is an awesomely brilliant feat, there are none before that have accomplished such. I no longer have anything to teach you. That is why, you should leave.” He was already an eighteen year old disciple that appeared exceptionally handsome. Although his whole attire was that of commoners, he was unable to conceal his heroic illustriousness, tall stature, and thick shoulders, long golden hair. He was almost perfect.

Nian Bing stared blankly at Zha Ji, “Master, you’re saying I can already finish my apprenticeship?” When he had just began to follow Zha Ji in learning culinary skill, not once had he thought he was capable of soon mastering Zha Ji’s skills to the point of needing to depart. However, people all have emotions. Getting along for eight years, although Zha Ji was extremely strict towards him, a deep relationship had arose long ago between them. Hearing Zha Ji tell him to leave at this moment, his heart was surged with an indescribable feeling of loss. Compared to eight years ago, his master had aged much. “You are already so old. If I leave, who will take care of you?”

Zha Ji smiled and said, “Foolish child, before you came, was I not already alone? Be at ease. Don’t tell me that I, the great Demon Chef, would starve to death? Your culinary skills much like mine during that time, already reaching a bottleneck. If you continue to stupidly stay here, there will be no improvement at all. Only by much exploration on your own, will you be able to gain deeper experiences and not waste what I have taught you.”

Nian Bing's eyes flashed, "Master, I can't bear to part with you!"

Zha Ji pulled Nian Bing's thin, big hands and lightly sighed, "Stupid boy, don't tell me you want to stay here forever and accompany me? Even if you were to stay here with me, there will inevitably be a day when I die. To take you as my apprentice was completely from my own selfishness, I only cared about passing my skills on. Not only did you not blame me, but you still intently followed me in learning culinary skill. I've troubled you for all these years."

Nian Bing's whole body shook, "Master, you already knew?"

Zha Ji smiled and said, "When you took out that ice stone, when you looked at the Ice God Pagoda's chariot, you displayed an intense hatred. I had realized at once. At that time, the hypnotism had no effect. Did you know? At that time, I was somewhat fearful in my heart. You were only ten years old then, but you had such profound thoughts. I absolutely had not anticipated it. I truly did not know whether I should be happy to have such a clever and calm apprentice, or be afraid of your scheming. However, now everything isn't important anymore. I am convinced that you are a good child. In your heart, you certainly hid a story, the story pertaining to your parents."

"Master, I will tell you all of it." Nian Bing's voice somewhat trembled. Seeing Zha Ji's benevolent face, he suddenly felt an ominous premonition.

Zha Ji shook his head, "Leave it in your heart. I believe that your parents had something to do with the Ice God's pagoda. That is

why you displayed such heavy hatred when you saw that carriage. Child, hatred isn't wrong. But it was just as I said when I attempted to hypnotize you. When you don't have enough strength, you must conceal your hatred at the bottom of your heart. Revenge is a dish best served cold."

Nian Bing firmly nodded, "I promise you that before I have the necessary strength, I will not make any attempt to take revenge against the Ice God's Pagoda."

Zha Ji faintly smiled, "That's good. Nian Bing, originally my master had told me this before, practice cooking for ten years, comprehend cooking for ten years. These words, I've remembered my entire life. But since I've arrived to this Peach Blossom Forest, I've added more words behind me. They are: Live a life of solitude, one defeat will be your downfall."

Chapter 8.1 – True Sun Knife

“Practice cooking for ten years, Comprehend cooking for ten years, live a life of solitude, one defeat will be your downfall.” Nian Bing repeated Zha Ji’s words. “Master, I understand. Be at ease. I will definitely take back the title of Demon Chef for you.”

Zha Ji shook his head, “It is done. The title of Demon Chef is mine, not yours. You have mastered my skill, but that is not enough to satisfy in any actuality. Only with unceasing improvements will you be able to reach the pinnacle of culinary skill. Chefs are one of the six most common professions. You must strive to practice magic. This occupation just happens to be your best cover. I did not hate that woman from that time; you don’t need to look for her. The past is already behind us. If it wasn’t for her, perhaps I would still be unable to comprehend the marvelousness of combining magic and culinary skill. Even more so, I would’ve never received you as such a great apprentice.” As he said this, his wrinkly hand took out a long cloth bundle and handed it over to Nian Bing. “This was my old partner. Now, I give it to you. Take it out and have a look.”

Nian Bing opened the cloth bundle. After removing the cloth from the bundle,, a knife was in front of him. A vegetable knife generally didn’t have a scabbard, but this one did. It resembled his Morning Dew. The blade’s length was comparable to Morning Dew’s. It was just that the knife blade was much broader, enough to cover four inches. The back of the knife was extremely thick, reaching half an inch. He grabbed the knife. The weight was quite heavy, no less than three times the weight of his Morning Dew Knife. The scabbard was a vermillion red. On the top of it was an antique design. Nian Bing adjusted his hand to the knife handle slowly taking out the knife.

A dim scorching smell that came from the dark red knife blade filled his nose. Nian Bing's hand trembled. The flame god's stone in his bosom let out a deep thunder. The magic power of the origin of fire and ice within his body revolved because of the Fire God's Stone's agitation, and it was slowly increasing. When he fully pulled the blade from its scabbard, the originally disharmonic broad edge and thick knife's back actually had an abnormal beauty. The entire knife's upper blade turned into a dark red luster. The edges and corners of the knife blade were clear, similar to a shark's fin. An elegant streamline ran through the entire blade. With knife in hand, he could not stop the blaze from making his blood boil.

“This was a treasured knife I obtained after I became famous. It is my old partner, like a brother. It has always accompanied me at my side. Still remember Hua Tian? Apart from your morning dew, this is the knife he is most proud of. This True Sun was not forged or finished with metal. It is more accurate to say it was carved out. It's fundamental material is a fire dragon's horn.”

“Fire dragon horn? Master, are there truly fire dragons?” Looking at the True Sun knife's graceful streamlined grain patterns, Nian Bing curiously asked.

“I also cannot answer that question. I can only say that there were in legends. Even if there are, they are quite rare. The fire dragon horn at the time, was found by me inside a valley as a result of its heat. I knew that it was certainly a treasure, therefore I sought out Hua Tian and have him look at it. At the time he said to me, ‘this horn, I want it. How much money do you want for it?’ I, your master, was quite shrewd! I told him, ‘It's fine to just give you

the horn, but, you must create and give me your life's proudest knife. Make me a kitchen knife.' Hua Tian agreed. Consequently, I acquired this True Sun knife. He too, can be considered a true friend, as he used the Fire Dragon Horn to carve out this precious knife.. Because it was carved out, the blade has no blemishes whatsoever. Furthermore, it possesses the aura of the fire dragon and contains the fire attribute. Originally, if I hadn't lost to that woman in the match, I would have taken far too great care of True Sun and would have never made use of it. Even if she had combined magic with cooking and still could not win against me, the title of the Demon Chef would still have emptily passed on." Saying this, Zha Ji coughed a few times, but the proudness in his eyes were not at all diminished.

"Master, you should rest first and leave the rest for later." Nian Bing said with great concern and patted Zha Ji on the back.

Zha Ji smiled and said, "It's alright. It is only that I am too happy, nothing more. My disciple is just about to finish his apprenticeship. In the end, my skill doesn't have to enter the coffin with me. Nian Bing, what is your plan from now on?"

Nian Bing said with a blank expression, "I never thought about that question."

Zha Ji said, "Then why don't you hear out my recommendation? After you leave here, you should first go to Ice Snow City. I still don't know whether Hua Tian that old chap died yet. Go pay him a visit for me as he is number one of the great six blacksmiths. His treasures should be many, and are by no means limited to those [blades] you saw that day. I can't say for sure, but there are a few

benefits you can hope to gain.”

Nian Bing eyes grew red and tightly held Zha Ji’s hand. “Master, I don’t want to go. I truly don’t want to go.”

A peculiar light flickered in Zha Ji’s eyes. “Foolish child, did I not already say it? You cannot take shelter underneath my wing forever! You should leave as you will want to eventually. Ice Snow City’s Grand Pavilion and Pure Wind House are the most famous restaurants in Ice Moon Empire. Those places should be your first stop. You can choose one as you wish. Think of a way to enter the kitchen and observe the chefs’ skills there. Perhaps you will be able to receive some benefit. However, you must remember not to reveal your own culinary skill, otherwise at your current ability, you will easily attract the attentions of others. If a state official appeared, it would be quite inconvenient.”

Nian Bing tearfully nodded, “Master, I will remember this. I will surely learn like you originally had and travel to all of the six corners and learn every kind of dish and style of cooking. I will certainly not disappoint you.”

Zha Ji wiped Nian Bing’s flowing tears and kindly said, “Foolish child, why are you crying? Remembering this is enough. On the kitchen stove’s left, the wall is hollow. Inside it, I put away some savings. You can take a portion of it, enough to cover your travel expenses. Although money isn’t such a great thing, without it, all things become more difficult. Take more and there are less troubles. As for everything else, you will want to get over it slowly. I feel like your magic with just power alone still isn’t enough. If you have the opportunity, you should seek out some instruction

from a profound magic expert. You must learn to act accordingly to chance encounters. If only there were something to help guide you. It wouldn't hurt to pay respect to a master. To never be too old to learn, is something every advanced chef must achieve."

Nian Bing nodded, and caught a glimpse of a red light on Zha Ji's face. The unease in his heart grew even more intense.

Zha Ji smiled. His smile was quite tranquil, "Child, your comprehension is much stronger than your master's. Although it's only been eight years, you have learned far more than I have learned in ten years originally. Eight years spent learning cooking, eight years spent comprehending cooking. However, I do not wish for you to be lonely throughout your life. If there is a suitable young woman, you mustn't let her slip by. Let go of what you're doing and chase after her. Happiness is something one should fight for."

It could be said that Nian Bing didn't understand a single word with regards to the matter of a male and a female, "Master, you should say this again later."

Zha Ji sternly said, "There is something you must promise me and there is something you must do. I do not wish for you to repeat my tragic mistake. To have a stable family would only grant you benefits. From now on, continue pursuing your study of culinary skill. It will also steady your heart even more. Didn't you say you wanted to make some fish soup for me? You should go now. Master is truly somewhat hungry. These few years, I've always eaten what you've made. Whatever I've made ended up somewhat tasteless."

Nian Bing nodded with force, “Be at ease. I will certainly put out the most delicious bright flame fish soup for you to taste.”

Zha Ji faintly smiled and waved his hand, “Go, Master will wait for you.”

Nian Bing agreed at once, gathered his enthusiasm, and sprung up, trotting out of the room. Seeing Nian Bing from behind, Zha Ji’s eyes displayed a gratified radiance. “Child, Master made no mistake. Although you schemed quite deeply, you still became an emotional person. To have such a disciple, what else do I have left to recall fondly?” He picked up True Sun knife with shaking hands and sighed softly. He hurriedly scratched on the ground. Although the handwriting was distorted, it could still be regarded as recognizable.

Nian Bing quickly ran to the river bank, so that he could quickly let his master eat his fish soup. These past few years, he had long practiced swimming with his whole body in the river. After a moment, he had already caught two fat mackerels and returned to shore. Looking at the lively fish in his hand, he did not care about the traces of water on his body. He said to himself, “The fish today are quite fresh. Master, I will surely put out a great fish soup that will leave you satisfied.”

While talking, Nian Bing energetically ran back to Peach Blossom Forest. A few large strides later, he had already arrived in front of the wooden house. Master, Master! Look! I caught two large fish. After you eat a little of this, I’m afraid you’ll already be full. Master....”

When Nian Bing arrived once more to Zha Ji's room, he was completely astonished. It was as if his whole body froze over, rigidly motionless. Zha Ji was reclining as before on his cozy desk chair. However, his eyes were already closed. His serene appearance would suggest he had fallen asleep. However, Nian Bing clearly knew that was by no means Zha Ji's sleeping posture. In addition, there was not a day where his master's snoring did not echo. But now, however...

Chapter 8.2 – True Sun Knife

The fish fell to the ground and bounced around in disarray, struggling to look for a way to survive. However, the fish had already departed from the water. How could they possibly continue to live without it?

Nian Bing quickly threw himself in front of the desk chair, closely grabbing Zha Ji's hand. He felt his own hand tremble along with his heart.

Zha Ji's hand was already somewhat cold. Nian Bing's stomach lurched. He moved his trembling finger underneath Zha Ji's nose and waited, hoping. But alas, fate is cruel. everything was so cruel, All of his hopes had turned into soap bubbles. Zha Ji had passed away. With a satisfied smile, he had passed away.

Tears uncontrollably poured down. Nian Bing felt extreme sorrow from within his heart and had even went as far as to cry without a sound; his body continuously shook. Scenes from the past continuously flashed throughout his mind; Zha Ji had saved him and brought him to Peach Blossom Forest, giving his all to instruct him. These past years, Zha Ji was exactly like Nian Bing's own father, caring for him in every possible way. Eight years, why only these short eight years? Master! Nian Bing is still waiting for you to see his journey to the peak of culinary skill! How could you possibly pass away? Don't tell me that you didn't wish to see Nian Bing become the greatest chef? Master, why did you die? Why?

Nian Bing's heart bled. Apart from that time at the Ice God's Pagoda, this was the most sorrowful hour of his life. As he lowered

his head, tears fell to the ground. He finally looked at the True Sun Knife. A faint warmth flowed, wandering through the blade. It was his master's truest love. He noticed a few small slanted words had been carved into the ground, "Nian Bing, Master fears that he cannot wait for your fish soup. In fact, soon after my hands' tendons were severed, my heart had already died. As a chef, being unable to use your own hands to put out your most brilliant dishes is something even more painful than dying. The reason why I was alive, struggling at death's door, was because I did not wish to let the entirety of my skill follow me as I passed. Nian Bing, Master is selfish. Here, I want to say that I am sorry. Master had passed. However, Master had left his skills behind. I am convinced you will certainly pass down what you have unceasingly learned and raise your culinary skills to magnificence, becoming the greatest chef. Master also did not expect to pass away so soon. However, my body has repeatedly endured for quite a long time. Every time I told myself, I must press on, I must persevere until the moment you were capable of surpassing me. The heavens did not treat me coldly. They let me persevere until this day came at last. Nian Bing, did you know? When I saw your culinary skills approach mine, my heart was so excited, even more excited than if I could cook with my own hands again. Do not feel sad. There would be no meaning in it. Focus your entire state of mind into culinary skills and practicing magic. Finally, Master must urge you, that while revenge is necessary, you must act within your means. Carefully, carefully. I must leave now. After you come back, take what you need, but don't move my body as I am quite fond of this chair. You should burn this place down. You can use your fire magic to turn this place to ashes. Master can be regarded as to have died at his appointed place." When he wrote his few final words, they were already exceptionally vague. If Nian Bing hadn't been exceptionally familiar with Zha Ji's handwriting, it would have been hard for him to read it, especially that last word. Zha Ji had only written half of it.

“Master, did you truly pass away like this?” Nian Bing’s tears had already dampened Zha Ji’s chest. He cautiously and solemnly brushed Zha Ji’s head neatly. He stood and took a step back, falling to his knees. He heavily knocked his head against the ground as he kowtowed nine times. “Master, I know you do not wish to see a weak Nian Bing. Be at ease, I will certainly become strong. From the hour I left the Ice God’s Pagoda, I had told myself, I must be strong. Tears may only flow from enemy eyes. Still, now I cry. Master, please rest assured. So long as Nian Bing still draws breath, I will surely complete your final wishes. I will raise culinary skill on a path of magnificence, this is my promise to you!”

He stood and returned the True Sun Knife to its sheath. Nian Bing strongly wiped away the tears on his face. He took a final deep look at Zha Ji’s deceased body and resolutely walked away from the room.

The wind was clean, and the clouds were few. The sunlight projecting onto Peach Flower Forest caused the trees’ shadows on the ground to appear raggedly dancing. A gentle breeze brought waves of the peace blossom’s scent. Nian Bing took deep breaths, strongly keeping the sorrow in his heart under control. In accordance to what Zha Ji had said, he had taken out a few purple gold coins from inside the hollow kitchen wall and carried a simple cloth wrapped bundle on his back.

Step by step, he moved onward. When Nian Bing walked that seventeenth step, he suddenly turned his body. “Master! Your disciple is now going. When the day comes that I have learned almost all there is, I will surely return here and commemorate your departed spirit. Fire, ignite! Scorching flame, by my name, I

command you, surge as a turbulent blaze, follow my directions, burn everything to ashes! Sea of Fire!” He unsheathed the True Sun Knife, and a red light was suddenly released. The red light clearly gathered toward Nian Bing’s body. A scorching aura caused Nian Bing’s body to become like a blazing war god. He pointed the True Sun knife forward, suddenly releasing waves of flame. In an instant, apart from the kitchen, the two other buildings were engulfed in fire.

Seeing the raging conflagration in front of him, it was as if Nian Bing saw his Master’s smile one last time. His eyes were blurry but he resisted from letting his tears flow with great difficulty. He made an oath in his heart that, starting today, he would become even stronger. Only if he were strong could he have a long life. Only if he were strong could he accomplish his and his master’s dreams.

Sea of Fire, rank 4 large scale fire spell. Although it was the same as a rank four spell, because it covered such a large area, it required an advanced mage to use it. The scorching flame quickly turned the room Nian Bing lived in for eight years into ashes. Likewise, his master, the Demon Chef Zha Ji, had subsequently returned to the yellow earth.

Everything had disappeared. Nian Bing’s eyes held back hot tears as he stepped forth on the journey Zha Ji had planned for him. He did not know what was waiting ahead of him, but his mind was clear. No matter what sort of untold dangers or difficulties there may be, nothing could obstruct his advance.

Peach Blossom Forest regained its tranquility. Smoke spiraled

from the ruins of the wood rooms. Hours after Nian Bing had departed, the ashes suddenly moved. Several snapping noises like that of breaking wood sounded out. With the sound of a wood breaking, a plank from underneath rose. An unsteady silhouette appeared to have climbed out from underneath the ground. His whole body covered with dust.

“Good youngster, you are still truly fierce enough! Were it not for my quick actions, I would have truly become ashe.” This who had suddenly climbed out from the ruins was actually Zha Ji from before!

Brushing away the dust on his body, he appeared to be in great spirits and appeared to not have a single ailment. Seeing the direction that Nian Bing departed, Zha Ji laughed. “Foolish child, master had no choice but to deceive you once more. Had I not made you believe I were already dead, how could you devote your heart and soul to pursue the pinnacle of culinary skill? Damn! This tortoise breath technique is truly hurtful. Fortunately, I had practiced it for a long time, shutting myself long enough so perfectly. It seems that my thoughts of staying here won’t do. Do I want to go look for her? Yes. Since I already have nothing to worry about, I may as well do what my heart had wanted to do all along. If only I could say good bye to her in person, even if she is dead, I would be willing. Nian Bing, travel well. Perhaps there will be a day that we, master and disciple, will be able to see each other again. Haha... hahahaha!”

Nian Bing walked on the main street. His heart was still immersed from the grief of Zha Ji’s passing, totally oblivious of his master’s ruse. The True Sun Knife and Morning Dew Knife were both in his bosom. The cold and hot auras continuously flowed,

stimulating his body. As a result of the ice magic power continuously revolving within his body, although the beautiful sun shined greatly, he did not feel the slightest bit warmer.

Ice Snow City, Master had wanted me to go to Ice Snow City. I'll go there first then.

Not needing to pull a cart, Not needing to follow Zha Ji's pace, Nian Bing walked quickly. He suddenly wanted greatly to depart from here greatly, to leave this heart-breaking place. However, he knew that at the same time, there will inevitably be a day that he will return. At that time, a Nian Bing fused with the hatred in his heart would return.

“Great Ice Elements! I request of you to lend me your wrath, deliver us to the lost shore. Blizzard.” The main street uninhabited, Nian Bing chanted out a large scale ice spell. The surrounding atmosphere immediately became cold. Under the effect of blue magic power via the Ice and Snow Goddess's stone, an enormous magical effect burst forth. Wind and ice arrived simultaneously. The range within the conjured power became an ocean of snow. Faintly smiling, Nian Bing moved extremely fast. Not knowing when, the Morning Dew knife had already jumped into his hand. A faint blue radiance enveloped his body. Moving to follow the blizzard, he flew off. Although he did not fly high, he moved surprisingly quick. In a blink of an eye, he had already faded from the end of the main street.

Chapter 8.3 – True Sun Knife

The Ice God's Tower.

“Did the Ice Snow Goddess's stone's qi disappear again? How many years has it been? For it to once again reappear, this time, I won't let you get away from my grasp. No matter who has the Ice Snow Goddess's stone, that person has already offended the Ice Snow Goddess's honor, and there can only be one outcome for such person, death!”

For the grand Ice Snow Goddess's sacrificials, the Ice Snow Goddess divine descendant departed from the Ice God's Tower alone as one person ventured on a journey in search for the Ice Snow Goddess' stone.

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By casting Blizzard once, Nian Bing had greatly cut down his travel time. As he had his foot firmly planted on the ground, his sorrowful mood had already lessened a little in that ice-cold magic. Faraway, the tall city walls of Ice Snow City were in view. Once every year for these past years, he came here to buy things. Yet apart from the first time when he visited the Blacksmith God Hua Tian, every other instance, he and his master only went around near the north gate. Where, after purchasing all of the goods they needed, they would immediately return to the Peach Blossom Forest.

This time was different. The road back no longer existed for him

anymore. He took a deep breath, and resolutely, step by step, walked towards the Ice Snow City.

Entering the city was as easy as it was before. On both sides of the street, it was the same scenery as before. Only a few stores had changed their owners. 'Master said I should go find senior Hua Tian. Since it was Master's order, that will be the first place I go.' The newly obtained True Sun knife was a fire attribute knife, so maybe his Flame God's stone could still be inlaid in it. If that was the case, he would be in possession of two exceptional God knives. In the future, when cooking, the effects could also be utilized quite a bit.

Deep in thought, Nian Bing relied on his memories to go to Shui Huo Metal Tools shop. Last time he came, the confusing alleys were already shrouded in darkness.

Suddenly, something stirred in his heart. He recalled the last time he came; he had seen a very big weapon shop that seemed to be called something like Precious Tool Pavillon. If he could find that place, maybe he could find Shui Huo Metal's signboard. Perhaps, no one can recognize Shui Huo Metal's signboard, but someone should know that big weapon shop Precious Tool Pavillon. With these thoughts, he promptly put it in action. As he had expected, after inquiring with several people, he finally found the exact location of the weapon shop. From there, his brain clearly remembered the directions to Shui Huo Metal shop. He accelerated his pace, and after seven turns and eight detours later, he finally arrived at his destination.

The doors were as dilapidated as it was seven years earlier and

without many changes. That signboard was still up there and was more dusty than ever. When Nian Bing recalled his first encounter with Hua Tian, he couldn't help smiling slightly. He moved to the door and knocked several times, as he said clearly, "Senior Hua Tian, are you there?"

There was no sound coming from inside. Nian Bing waited for a moment, then once more he called out for Hua Tian. Just when he thought there was no one inside, the ruined door unexpectedly opened. From behind the doors, a charming face appeared. "You, you're looking for my master?"

Nian Bing could swear that from the time he was born, he had never heard a voice so beautiful. The girl appeared to be not much older than him. As for her appearance, pink long hair drifted down, and a pair of big blue eyes revealed three parts astonishment and seven parts bashfulness. When looking at him, she seemed somewhat afraid.

Chapter 9.1 – Feng Nu And The Heavenly Flame Sword

After many years of practicing magic, Nian Bing's spirit power already reached a formidable level. He coughed to concealed his awkwardness and said, "Hello, I'm the one who came to find Senior Hua Tian. Is he here?"

The girl looked up and down several times, sizing up Nian Bing. She said in a somewhat doubtful tone, "Who are you? What do you want, trying to look for him?"

Nian Bing heard the young lady's cautious question. He couldn't help thinking about his master. He softly sighed, "I am here to pay my respects to Senior Hua Tian on the final wishes of my deceased master."

The young lady still didn't believe Nian Bing. She asked, "Who was your master?"

Nian Bing's brows slightly creased as he said, "It is forbidden for me to spread my master's name. Previously, my master had one nickname, he was called the Demon Chef."

Hearing the two words, Demon Chef, the young lady shouted in alarm and threw the doors wide open as she rushed out. Nian Bing could now clearly see her entire appearance. Her clothing was blue in color from the top down to the trousers, except for her head. Her chest was wrapped with bindings. Her very tall neck was protected. Her exquisite body was both curvy and delicate. She had

a beautiful pair of big blue eyes staring straight at him without blinking. That pair of blue eyes gave him the distinct impression of a clear blue sky without any bit of impurity, whereas his were a deep blue ocean. Nian Bing appeared astonished. The young lady's stature was very tall, most ordinary people were not that tall. Compared to her tall figure, he was only half a head taller. Covered by the trousers were a pair of slender thighs. All of this gave her a beauty that shook a person to their core.

The young lady saw Nian Bing sizing her up in turn. Her gorgeous face changed to express some bashfulness as she propped him with a question. "Are you Senior Zha's disciple? Just a moment ago you said his last wish, don't tell me... don't tell me Senior Zha is already..."

Nian Bing sadly nodded his head and said, "My master has just recently passed away. Young lady, where is Senior Hua Tian?"

The young woman looked at Nian Bing with a somewhat doubtful look and said, "This Senior Hua Tian you mentioned is my master but, according to my master, Senior Zha only had a disciple who is a fatty and you're not fat at all! Furthermore, my master said that Senior Zha's health is very good, how could he suddenly die?"

Nian Bing looked at the young lady's serious appearance, causing his sorrow to unexpectedly lighten up somewhat despite Zha Ji's death, he laughed and said, "Man's fate is as uncertain as the weather, who can possibly say with certainty how long one may have left to live? Why do you believe that I'm a swindler? Last time Senior Hua Tian saw me, I was only 11 years old, that was already

seven years ago. I was fat at that time, but it doesn't mean that I'd grow up staying fat. Rest assured, that fat person you were talking about is me."

A cold light flash inside of the young lady's eyes, she persisted saying, "Only if you can take out something that will prove your identity, will you be able to see my master."

Nian Bing helplessly said, "I remember the last time I came, Senior Hua Tian didn't seem to have taken in a disciple. Since you demand proof, then take a look at this." As he said, he reached to his chest, took out Hua Tian's original and most successful work; the Morning Dew knife.

When the young lady saw the Morning Dew knife, her eyes immediately let out bright sparkles. She took hold of the knife's handle, carefully, as she was caressing the corroded scabbard. She felt a chilliness emanating from inside the scabbard, muttering, "That's right, that's right, it's exactly that, it's exactly that, ah! The Morning Dew knife." Her hands move to the knife's handle to where the precious stone was inlaid, she felt an ice-cold breath emitting from the rhombus shaped precious stone. She already somewhat believed him.

Nian Bing saw the precious knife in the young lady's hands and said, "I call it the Ice Snow Goddess' Sigh."

The young lady stared blankly and said, "A very beautiful name, only it sounds somewhat desolate. Why did you call it this?"

Nian Bing slightly smile and said, "I cannot tell you about this. Consider this as being my secret alone. Beautiful lady, now you can take me to see Senior Hua Tian, right?"

The young woman lightly nodded her head, holding firmly onto the Morning Dew knife and turned to go inside, "Come with me."

Nian Bing followed the young lady into Shui Huo Metal Tools shop's courtyard. It was as empty as it was last time. That furnace was still placed in the middle of the courtyard in addition to several others things beside it which appeared to help ignite things.

The young lady took Nian Bing toward the rooms inside. It was daytime which allowed Nian Bing to clearly see the ruined appearance of the two rooms. It appeared as if they could collapse at any given time. The young lady walked to a room door when she abruptly stopped, turned her head towards Nian Bing and said, "Please come in." When she finished speaking, she pushed open the door and invited Nian Bing with a gesture of her hands.

Nian Bing looked at the young lady limpid blue eyes. He didn't know why a feeling of strong trust arose from inside his heart without any trace of suspicion. In big strides, he went inside the room.

"Ah!" Nian Bing cried out in alarm. He barely entered the room as his footsteps had come to a halt. Inside the room there was only one window, sunlight poured in giving the inside of the dim room a somewhat clear view. In the room, Nian Bing saw there was a piece of sign exhibited on top of a counter. There was clearly a

name on it. It was a memorial tablet, written on top of it, “Teacher Hua Tian memorial tablet”

Abruptly turning his body, Nian Bing shockingly looked at the young lady, “Senior Hua Tian died?!?”

The young woman’s eyes reflected tears hazily, “Yes, two years ago, master abandoned me and just left.”

Nian Bing closed his eyes, sorrow once again stirred inside his heart. Facing again Hua Tian’s memorial tablet, he walked forward, both hands hanging on the side of his body. Respectfully, he gave three bows to the memorial tablet. “Senior, I didn’t expected that day would be the last day we would say goodbye. Senior, I hope that your spirit in the heavens will quickly find rest. My master also went to heaven. Perhaps, when you see him, you can ask him to make you some delicacies.”

The young lady straightened up behind Nian Bing. Seeing him respectful to Hua Tian, in her heart, her good impression of him couldn’t help but increased a bit. She went beside him and said, “Although master’s body has already departed, his spirit is still here. He will forever lived in my heart. The kindness of five years of teachings, I will never dare to forget. It’s a pity. I was only able to serve master for such a short amount of time.”

Nian Bing sighed deeply, “People will inevitably die. No one is able to control their own lifespan. It was so for Senior Hua Tian and it was so for my master. I don’t know when, but inevitably my time will also come.”

The young lady watched Nian Bing. In her eyes, he gave a distant and mature feeling, contrasting with his young age. Her blue eyes flashed a faint red light, “I still don’t know what your name is.”

Nian Bing was pulled out from his deep thoughts, “Ah! Greetings, my name is Nian Bing. Young lady, what about you?”

The young lady repeated in muttering, “Nian Bing, Nian Bing. This name sounds quite deep. I’m called Feng Nu.”

Nian Bing praised, “Indeed, you really are the world’s colorful phoenix. I truly didn’t expect when I came seven years ago for the first time, master and Senior Hua Tian were teasing each other. But now everything has completely changed, they have already passed away, leaving behind you and I. A man and a woman living together alone in a room is somewhat inappropriate. Since Senior Hua Tian has already passed away, then I’ll also take my leave. Miss Feng Nu, although fate has brought us together, departures are inevitable. May we meet again.”

Feng Nu watched as Nian Bing walked out with the Morning Dew knife held in his hand, she suddenly shouted, “Wait a moment!”

Nian Bing looked back, “Miss Feng Nu, do you still need something?”

On Feng Nu’s face appeared a faint trace of blushing. Fortunately, the lighting inside the room wasn’t sufficient therefore, it could not be easily perceived. “I, I simply want to ask

you, for what matters did you come to find my master this time?”

Nian Bing thought to himself. Since Feng Nu is Hua Tian’s disciple, maybe she could help him with his matters. Thinking of this, he took out from his bosom the True Sun knife that was handed over to him by his master. “You should have heard of this knife from Senior Hua Tian. Originally, this was Senior Hua Tian’s masterpiece.”

Feng Nu didn’t need to look. Merely by holding on to the handle, her eyes immediately brightened. It was somewhat brighter compared to when she was holding the Morning Dew knife, “True Sun, is that the True Sun knife?”

Nian Bing slightly nodded his head and said, “Exactly, it’s the True Sun knife. Zha Ji handed down his most beloved partner to me before he passed away. I have always carried on me and came to find Senior Hua Tian with that in mind. Apart from coming to see him, I have another business with him which concerns this True Sun knife. Although the True Sun knife is good, there is still a gap from beginning to end when compared to the Morning Dew knife. The reason why there is a gap is because True Sun doesn’t possess a genuine soul. Even though the fire dragon’s horn is a rare and valuable material, it doesn’t have the fire dragon’s soul imbued with it. Therefore, I wanted to imbue True Sun knife with a soul, allowing it to become a soul infused knife. So it can become something able to equal to the treasured knife, Morning Dew.”

Feng Nu’s eyes burned brightly as she looked at Nian Bing, “Tell me your idea. Do you happen to have on hand a fire attribute gem not inferior to that gem?”

Nian Bing faintly smiled, his hand searching his chest. He took hold of the Flame God's stone and fished it out from his pocket. The flame patterned gem emitted a faint red light as it appeared, the atmosphere inside the room seemed to fluctuate somewhat.

Chapter 9.2 – Feng Nu And The Heavenly Flame Sword

Feng Nu cried out in alarm when Nian Bing held the Flame God's stone in his hand. Her body trembled slightly as rays of fire suddenly shot soured out from her body. Her originally long, pink hair momentarily became a gorgeous, bright red, and even her blue eyes displayed a layer of faint red, as scorching as the fire qi that assailed her. Nian Bing didn't have much of a choice. He rested his hand on the Morning Dew knife, easily unsheathing it with a flick of his thumb. A blue, faintly chilly light spread out and shot towards Nian Bing. The layer of ice protected him from the scorching stream of qi.

Gradually, the red light vanished, and Feng Nu returned back to her normal appearance. Her eyes flashed with a complex radiance, "Good, this is a very high grade fire stone. If it was to be inlaid in the True Sun knife, it could greatly improve the knife's quality. Although master has already passed away, I'm willing to try to inlay this fire stone in the True Sun knife."

Seeing Feng Nu's crystal clear gaze, Nian Bing's heart indescribably palpitated, almost rushing to agree. However, he forced himself to calm down even before the fire ray disappeared as he felt that something was amiss. This beautiful woman in front of him didn't appear as simple as her appearance might let on. He hesitated a bit and said, "Miss Feng Nu, I want to know how Hua Tian senior died. Can you tell me?" The Flame God's stone was his father's memento. There's no way he would just simply agree to give it to a stranger without question. Especially if it was a charming woman that suddenly appeared and baffled him. Originally, his father had a falling out with the family clan in order

to use this stone. This matter had to be handled carefully.

Feng Nu glanced at Nian Bing with a deep look. “This year I’m seventeen years old. I was born in Clear Wood Empire. My parents were simple commoners. When I was five, my hometown had a big plague which took my parents’ lives. From then on, I had no choice but to wander the streets. Five years later, when I was ten, I came to Ice Snow City and begged master to take me in as a disciple. From master’s words, I learned that I had the Innate Heavenly Fire body. At once, he took me to register at the gateway. Wholeheartedly, he exhausted himself trying to teach me everything. Five years ago, master felt that his body couldn’t keep going on. However, he wasn’t willing to yield to fate. So he heated the furnace, perfecting his skills. It was two years ago that he did the unthinkable to make a one of a kind double-edge sword. By throwing his own body in the furnace, he poured all of his soul into the double-edge sword to successfully create a once in a lifetime masterpiece: a God Sword. In the end, there was no corpse; not even his ashes remained. Still, he hadn’t died because his soul had completely merged with the sword. The sword was forged by master’s Nine Heavenly Flames along with his soul. This is why I call it the Heavenly Flame Sword. The material it was made from was the same material as the True Sun knife, which you must have heard from senior Zha Ji. It’s from the Fire Dragon’s horn.”

While she spoke, Feng Nu returned the Flame God’s stone and the True Sun knife to Nian Bing. Without a word, she went inside. Nian Bing’s heart was slightly moved. When Feng Nu described how Hua Tian used his body to refine the sword, there was a deep sadness in her eyes which could not have been feigned. As for her identity, he couldn’t help but slightly believe her.

A while later, Feng Nu came out, in her hands was a majestic double-edged sword. Its scabbard was the same vermilion color of the True Sun knife. At the top, there was such a vivid carving of a five-clawed, fire dragon that it almost felt as if it was alive. In the fire dragon's mouth was an unblemished white pearl which emitted a gentle light, causing the scabbard to appear exceptionally gorgeous. The hilt of the sword had a ribbed pattern, while inlaid on the back was a white precious stone. Nian Bing was extremely familiar with this kind of precious stone; it was similar to the white jade Heavenly Flower tile.

Feng Nu looked at Nian Bing and said, "This is master's final masterpiece: the Heavenly Flame sword. It's a 1.1 meter double-edged sword with a blade 0.8 meters long, a thickness of 4 centimeters, a width of 20 centimeters and a handle measuring 23 centimeters." As the sword was unsheathed, a ring lightly echoed, like a dragon's cry resounding throughout the entire room. A blazing light emerged and tinted the air. Suddenly, a scorching aura burst out, and Feng Nu's wrist slightly shook as the Heavenly Flame sword appeared with a curtain of blazing light.

"An excellent sword." Nian Bing blurted out as he stared at the red aura on the edge of the blade. He sensed that the quality of this sword was no less inferior to Morning Dew.

Feng Nu faintly smiled as she looked at the sword's blade. Her eyes were brimming with emotions. "Yes, it's an excellent sword. Although it doesn't have the best precious stone inlaid and doesn't possess your Morning Dew's ability to double as a magic staff, it has master's soul inside. For an accomplished martial arts practitioner with a long sword, it's undoubtedly one of the best weapons. I think, right now, we shouldn't test and doubt each

other anymore. What do you think?”

Nian Bing’s face became slightly red and said, “Miss Feng Nu, I didn’t want to doubt you. It’s because this Flame God’s stone is the only thing my father left to me. Therefore, I have no choice but to be cautious!”

Feng Nu’s eyes exuded a gentle light, and she said, “I also don’t blame you. Now, I clearly understand your reason. Besides, the joy of creating an exceptional God blade with your own hands cannot compare to achieving fame as a Blacksmith, right? Please, would you allow me to upgrade the True Sun to perfection? The carving doesn’t require much time. During that time, you can take my Heavenly Flame. When I’m finished, you can come back with the Heavenly Flame and the Flame God’s stone. I will probably need your help at the time of the inlay.”

Nian Bing shook his head and said, “No. There is no need, Feng Nu. May I call you without the formalities? I’ll just leave the True Sun knife with you. I don’t need to take your Heavenly Flame sword either. My master and senior Hua Tian were good friends. I hope that we can also become friends. I trust you.” As he spoke, he turned to take out the True Sun knife, turning back to give it to Feng Nu.

Feng Nu looked slightly distracted. With a flick of her wrist, she returned the Heavenly Flame sword to its scabbard. Then, she accepted the True Sun knife. As she grabbed the thick knife’s handle, her slim white fingers accidentally touched Nian Bing’s fingers. Their bodies simultaneously jolted. Since neither had much contact with the opposite gender, they couldn’t stop

themselves from blushing. Feng Nu lowered her head and stared at the True Sun knife. “Why do you believe me so quickly?”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “Because I trust my own intuition.” What intuition? His intuition was part of the reason why he trusted her. As for the real reason, it was because he realized something. When Feng Nu took out the Heavenly Flame, her body emitted a powerful dou qi that was comparable to Hua Tian’s dou qi. Seeing this kind of dou qi’s strength inside the small and narrow room, he believed he was in a disadvantageous situation. This was quite feasible, since, as a magician, he restrained a warrior from far away. Although in his case, he could quickly cast some low level magic spells. However, it was impossible for him to even narrowly escape with luck. Besides, the house was in ruin, which already hinted at a lot of things. If you wanted people to trust you, you had to trust them first.

Feng Nu smiled and seemed very happy that Nian Bing trusted her. “Thank you! We are already friends, right? The carving needs at least a month. Come back in a month with the Flame God’s stone if you wish for a new God knife made by my hands. Just tell me beforehand if you have things to do somewhere far away. After I finish carving, I can wait for you for at least a year or two since it’s unlikely that I’ll leave for anywhere in the meantime.”

Nian Bing said, “I will also stay in Ice Snow city for a certain period of time. I shall see you in a month’s time. I’ll be leaving first.”

Feng Nu watched Nian Bing. Suddenly, she said, “Eat a meal before you go. I don’t think you’ve eaten yet.”

Nian Bing stared blankly for a while. Something peculiar arose in his heart. He quickly nodded and said, "True, I still haven't eaten yet." Zha Ji's death burdened his heart with inconsolable grief. Although, he was very good at controlling his emotions, he wasn't in the mood to eat anything the whole day. Now that Feng Nu inquired about his health, he became aware of the growls coming from his empty stomach. He was quite hungry. "Then, Miss Feng Nu, I will take your kind offer. I'll stay for a meal. First, I must thank you."

Feng Nu's clear eyes shined brightly. "It's alright! How could I have forgotten that you're the Demon Chef's disciple? The food you make must be very tasty. It seems like this time I'll have the opportunity to taste some fine food. Just a moment ago, why didn't you call me by my name directly? You don't need to add 'Miss' or other stupid titles." She appeared to be high spirited. There was no trace of her previously calm demeanor. She instead acted like a little kid.

When Nian Bing followed Feng Nu into Shui Huo Metal shop's kitchen, he had a bitter smile on his face. It was said that the cleverest housewife couldn't cook without rice. The same goes for a good chef. Without ingredients, even cooking masters couldn't make anything. In the small kitchen, which was only four or five square meters, excluding fresh vegetables and meat, there was only salt for seasoning. Apart from rice, there was nothing else that could be consumed.

Chapter 9.3 – Feng Nu And The Heavenly Flame Sword

“Feng Nu, what do you eat every day? Why is there only rice?” Nian Bing asked puzzledly.

Feng Nu lowered her head and embarrassedly said, “Ah, every day, I only drink congee! It was the same when master was still alive; he said that congee works best for digestion. We would occasionally buy and cut some vegetables to boil with the congee. Master also said it was nourishing enough. I just ate the last vegetable yesterday, so I’ll go buy some now. What else do you need?”

“Only drink congee?!” Nian Bing looked at Feng Nu, dumbstruck. He laughed bitterly. “Your lifestyle really is plain and simple. No need to go buy anything. Let’s go out instead.”

Once again, they went into the courtyard. Feng Nu looked at Nian Bing. Guiltily, she said, “Sorry! You were supposed to stay for a meal, but I forgot that I didn’t have any vegetables.”

Nian Bing shook his head and smiled. An indescribable feeling of tenderness rose inside his heart. “It doesn’t matter. I’m quite resourceful. If I can’t even deal with this, then I’m not fit to be the Demon Chef’s disciple.” While chatting, he looked around. The sun had already rose high in the sky. He quickly found what he was looking for on top of the courtyard wall. He lifted his hand and pointed toward it. From his eyes glinted blue, two equally colored lights flashed like lightning from his finger. Immediately, two pigeons that were playing on the wall were pierced, and fell

lifelessly inside the courtyard.

Feng Nu looked at Nian Bing in shock. “You can also use martial skills? But why did you kill the pigeons?! Ah, they are so pitiful!”

Nian Bing said, “I can’t use martial skills. That was merely ice magic, a low level ice arrow spell. Also, countless people are killed every day, so killing a pigeon or two shouldn’t be that big of a deal. Feng Nu, you should know that in a chef’s eyes, as long as something can be eaten, it can be classified as an ingredient. Besides, you simply have none in your house. I really have no other choice, but to gather ingredients in this way.”

Feng Nu looked at Nian Bing resentfully. “I didn’t expect you to be such a cruel person.”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “I’m a cruel person? Well, you just don’t have to eat my cooking later then.” While speaking, he picked up the pigeons and walked to a corner. After going through eight years of strict training, his spirit power had reached a very high level. When he had produced the ice arrow, it shattered the two pigeons’ heads, letting them die a painless death.

He walked past Feng Nu, still holding the pigeons. Looking at her with a somewhat dull gaze, Nian Bing smiled and said, “Pigeons have an extremely rich nutritional value. Their meat are very beneficial to the body. It’s effective in strengthening the body and kidneys. Since you said I’m cruel, don’t beg for some after I’ve finished cooking.” He immediately walked inside the kitchen.

“No way. I’m not going to beg!” Feng Nu stubbornly glared at Nian Bing before following him.

Nian Bing took a basin, changed the water, and returned to the courtyard. With quick movements, he unplucked all the feathers from the pigeons and took out their five visceras before neatly cleaning them from inside out.

Seeing the gore and blood, Feng Nu furrowed her eyebrows. She persisted on staying near Nian Bing and continue to observe him. Nian Bing only smiled faintly. With a flip of his wrist, he took out the Morning Dew knife from his chest. As he used his spirit power to control his magic, he easily directed his magic into the bloody basin and the five visceras to freeze them. Gently, he turned over the basin, and the ice fell out. Nian Bing skillfully took the washed pigeons out of the ice and softly chanted, “Scorching fire, burst forth your passionate heart! Exploded into this world between Heaven and Earth, Exploding Flame spell!” In front of him, fire concentrated into a ball. A bright and shiny light sparked in his eyes as the Exploding Flame’s sphere of about 12.5 cm in diameter loudly rumbled and exploded with a Bang! The chunk of bloody ice disappeared without any trace, leaving behind only thin evaporating steam .

Feng Nu foolishly looked at Nian Bing. “You! You know two types of magic? Fire and Ice, how can that be possible?”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “Since the origin of the world, nothing has been impossible. As long as you wish for it and have the courage, you can even turn fantasy into reality. When I was practicing culinary art with my master, so we came up with this

kind of method to destroy garbage. How could we leave behind trash? The mix of ice and raging inferno can turn things into water vapor. Previously, when I froze the bloody water, I had already taken the pigeons' five visceras and blended them together with the ice. Within the Exploding Flames blast, it completely disappeared along with the ice." Exploding Flames was a third level magic spell that needed the power of an intermediate mage to be able to fully exhibit the extreme explosive force of the spell.

Nian Bing returned to the kitchen while grabbing the pigeons by their legs. As a result of Nian Bing's treatment of the pigeons, Feng Nu didn't have much of a good impression left about him. Leaning on the kitchen's door frame, she watched Nian Bing, wondering what he was doing. She was astonished to discover that Nian Bing's whole person seemed to have transformed. Holding the pigeons by their legs, he stood as steady as a boulder. His gaze became sharper as he became more focused on the pigeon. 'What could he be looking at?' Suddenly, he moved. Feng Nu only saw a blue radiance that appeared into the air and flickered beautifully. At this moment, Nian Bing's right hand had become illusionary, with multiple after images flickered continuously. On the chopping board of the long narrow table, perfectly sliced meat slices fell one after another. Although Feng Nu couldn't even clearly see the shadow of the knife, she was still amazed by the blue, twinkling radiance. Under Nian Bing's hand, the pigeon quickly became a skeleton. From beginning to end, it only took a few moments to cut the pigeon. Nian Bing took the other pigeon and, once again, the blue radiance flickered as he butchered the second pigeon until only the skeleton was left. Then, he put it next to the other one beside the pile of perfectly sliced pieces of meat. Nian Bing took out a white handkerchief from his chest and wrapped it around the blade of Morning Dew knife. A mist of frost appeared on top of the blade as he slowly wiped the knife without leaving any traces of grease and blood on it.

Nian Bing faintly smiled. When he went in front of the kitchen's stove, he pointed at the stove with his left hand and a fireball stroke at the firewood, igniting a fire. A clean pot was then placed on the stove. The pigeons' bones were thrown into the pot. Next, he took the fresh water by his side and poured it into the pot until the bones were completely submerged in water. He carefully covered the pot with a lid. Then, he smiled and said, "Drink the soup and only then will you absorb all the nutrients!"

Feng Nu looked at Nian Bing, dumbstruck. She mumbled a question. "You really haven't learned any martial skills? The way you use your knife is so fast!" Although she was also cultivating dou qi, she clearly understood that her skills could not measure up to Nian Bing's speed.

Nian Bing smiled and said, "My knife skills can only cut vegetables and slice meat. They're merely basic knife skills and nothing more. It's similar to you cultivating senior Hua Tian's Nine Flame dou qi. Unfortunately, I want to concentrate on cultivating my magic. If that wasn't the case, I would probably consult you about a few things pertaining to dou qi. I can't make pigeon's stew, since you only have salt, so I'm making a simple pigeon dish for you to eat." While saying this, he took out a small square cloth bag from his waist and spread it on top of the chopping board. Inside the cloth bag, there were all kinds of pouches. They were of different sizes, and each of them held something in particular. The biggest contained a small knife, whereas the smallest contained needles. Altogether, there were ten pouches, most of them filled with needle-like objects.

Feng Nu curiously asked, "What are you doing with these things?"

How come these look like a doctor's practice tools? Don't tell me you also know acupuncture and moxibustion?!"

Nian Bing smiled faintly and said, "Needles aren't only used for acupuncture and moxibustion. They can also be used for cooking." While he was talking, he took another pot from the side. He scooped up some rice and put fresh water in it. Then, he once again set himself to work. His left hand pinched a grain of rice while his right hand took out thin needles from a pouch. His right hand later moved towards the second of the needles, and grabbed it. Suddenly, the head of the needle turned red and started emitting heat. Fire magic heated the needle, until its head became red. His right wrist shook and went towards the grain of uncooked rice in his left hand. Simultaneously, he used his pinky to lift the slice of meat. The needle pierced through the uncooked rice before it bore through the meat. Immediately after, Nian Bing's movements started to speed up. Once again, he took a grain of rice and threaded it with a needle, before piercing it through the meat. Unexpectedly, he made use of the uncooked rice grain in such a clever way! It became something similar to a thread linking the sliced meat like a skewer. Feng Nu's eyes filled with amazement at the wonderful, god-like actions. It didn't look anything like cooking! It clearly looked more as if he was making a perfect handicraft object!

Nian Bing's hands continuously made complex movements without hesitation, neither making any errors, nor being negligent. Both hands were so fast, they looked like a flow of phantom images. However, even with his speed, it still took half an hour to thread all the slices of meat. Seeing the rows and rows of meat and rice, Nian smiled. This kind of Rice Through Meats technique could only be accomplished with the combination of magic. Without the use of the burning hot fire needle, it was

fundamentally impossible to evenly pierce through every single grain of rice as if they were some kind of beads. Nian Bing turned around and lift the lid of the pot. After the pigeons' bones were done simmering into the soup, a fragrant scent started to come from the heated steam that wafted out of the pot. He took the ladle by his side and carefully scooped out the pigeons' bones. Seeing the milky-white broth, he hesitated a bit before mumbling several incantations. A faint blue light appeared on the chopping board and wrapped itself around the rice that was threading the meat. As the Morning Dew knife appeared, they unexpectedly froze together and became one. Lightly, he arranged the pieces of meat with the frozen rice grains directly into the pot. There were thin layers of salt covering the skewers. Nian Bing covered the pot with a lid after he had put all of them in. He then sheathed the Morning Dew knife back into the scabbard. He turned towards Feng Nu as the afternoon light shone on her. Feng Nu had a dull expression on her face as he said to her, "Good! After being cooked for around thirty minutes, it should be ready. Although the flavor of cooked pigeon's meat is not bad, it's still a waste of labor compared to other things. Still, I'll have to ask you to wait for a moment."

Feng Nu looked oddly at Nian Bing. "You...what kind of cooking is this? If this was some normal chef, I'm afraid that they wouldn't even be able to finish it in one day."

Nian Bing laughed and said, "One day? If they use the whole day, the pigeon's meat can't be eaten anymore. In actual practice, it doesn't mean anything to only make beautiful-looking dishes. Wait until you taste this before making a conclusion."

They both exited the kitchen. Feng Nu's previous bad impression of Nian Bing's god-like kitchen skills had long vanished like smoke

in thin air. They both entered the courtyard, and sat down on two wooden stools. Nian Bing appeared somewhat tired. His eyes narrowed as he looked at the lofty old tree in the courtyard. The sliced meat rice skewer had used up all of his spirit energy to completely control his magic. It had required a lot of concentration to make it successful as he had done so much at one go. It was similar to controlling a large magic spell. He also didn't know why he had chosen to make such a tedious pigeon rice dish for Feng Nu; even though it sounded quite simple, the simpler the dish was, the more it would reveal the skills of the chef.

Chapter 10.1 – Pure Wind House

Feng Nu gave Nian Bing a sideways glance. She hadn't noticed his appearance earlier, but now that she did, she saw that he was a tall handsome young man with blond hair. Although he had thick and plain cotton clothes covering his magnificent body, it couldn't conceal his noble character. Her heart skipped a beat. She knew that she would forever be unable to forget the expressions on Nian Bing's face when he was single-mindedly concentrating on cooking. She softly asked, "Nian Bing, after the meal, where do you plan to go?"

Nian Bing looked at Feng Nu. In the silence, his mind gradually relaxed. "I'll stay in Ice Snow City for a while. Master said that there are two restaurants here whose chefs have pretty good skills. I want to head there to have a look; maybe I can even learn a few things."

Feng Nu abruptly said, "You're talking about the Grand Pavilion and the Pure Wind House, right? Those restaurants' foods are so expensive that it scares a person to death. I've only heard about it, but never actually went there. However, I'm certain that they won't be able to make anything like your miraculous pigeon's meat dish. How long do you plan to stay in Ice Snow City? Where will you be going today?"

Nian Bing noticed how detailed Feng Nu's questions were. When he turned his head to look at her, Feng Nu hurriedly replied, her charming face blushing red, "There isn't a deeper meaning to that, I just wanted to know where I can find you today since we're friends."

Nian Bing smiled and said, “I’ll stay in Ice Snow City at least until you’ve finished carving the True Sun knife. As for after that, I’ll probably travel to every corner of the continent. Eight years of cooking training, eight years of comprehending cooking. I’ve already finished training. For now, I need to truly understand the process of cooking. I don’t even know if I can travel the whole continent in eight years.”

Feng Nu seemed to be thinking about something. “In reality, having fame isn’t necessarily a good thing. It was the same for my Master. In his days, God Blacksmith Hua Tian was so famous that, every country’s generals thought it would be glorious to acquire a heroic weapon made by Master. As a result, every country wanted to restrict Master in their country, so he could forge weapons only for them. If he wasn’t that well-known, it probably wouldn’t have come to Master spending the rest of his years in this place, only to die in poverty. When Master was manufacturing the Heavenly Flame Sword, he once told me that it doesn’t matter what your profession is. If you want to reach the pinnacle, you must have great power to support you. Otherwise, it’s simply impossible to follow your heart’s desires and do what you want to do.”

“Great power as a support?” Nian Bing’s thoughts stirred. He nodded at the sound argument and said, ‘What Senior Hua Tian said was correct. If we can have the backing of great power, we can freely travel everywhere in pursuit of our goals. It’s no wonder your dou qi is so strong. It seems that Senior Hua Tian has spent quite a lot of effort in teaching you.’

Feng Nu smiled faintly and said, “Your magic is also not too bad! I really don’t know how you can practice both fire and water

magic. Don't they conflict with each other?"

Nian Bing didn't want to discuss this subject with Feng Nu. He stood up and spoke, "Maybe. In any case, I only use low level spells. Their effects aren't too much for me to handle." Naturally, he wouldn't easily let someone know about his powers. Even though he had a good impression of Feng Nu, the source of his fire and ice magic was his biggest secret.

They both continued to chat on a variety of subjects. Their discussion often revolved around anecdotes from their time learning under their masters. They weren't able to chat to their heart's content when Nian Bing remembered that the dish of pigeon's meat was done cooking.

"Wah! It's super delicious. Oh! It's so very fragrant." When Feng Nu took a small bite of the pigeon's meat, her appetite instantly filled her beautiful eyes. Nian Bing wasn't familiar with this young woman, so when he saw how fast she gulped down the food, he was dumbstruck.

"Nian Bing, why aren't you eating? If you're not eating, then I'm going to finish everything by myself. Why is your pigeon dish so delicious? I only saw you season it with salt!" Feng Nu didn't forget to call out to Nian Bing while eating. Nian Bing smiled wryly as he replied, "I'm eating. The reason why it's so delicious is because I fully combined the cooked rice with the pigeon's nutriment from the meat and the broth. As the rice soaked in the meat juice and the broth, it borrowed the fragrance of the pigeon's meat. I only added some salt to improve the taste. It would naturally be delicious." He started eating while explaining, as he was really

unsure whether there would be anything left for him if he didn't start eating soon.

They wiped out the whole pot of food. If the portions were to be calculated, Nian Bing had only eaten 30%. As for the rest of the 70%, it ended up in Feng Nu's stomach. Feng Nu leaned back on the chair, and took a few breaths. Her balmy lips appeared to be rosier, and her charming face was sweating slightly. "Nian Bing, that was very delicious. This is the first time I have ever eaten such delicious rice! It's no wonder Senior Zha Ji was famous worldwide!"

Nian Bing laughed bitterly. "My amazement isn't any less when compared to yours Feng Nu, could it be all girls eat like this? I thought what I made was enough for your dinner, and that was according to my way of portioning food. I didn't expect that we would eat all of it."

Feng Nu's face turned crimson. She glared at Nian Bing, and felt that she'd been wronged. She shouted, "I've only had congee to drink every day until now, is it wrong to want to eat to my fill? Couldn't you have told me that this meal also included a portion for my dinner?"

Nian Bing faintly smiled. He said, "As long as you like eating it, it is good. If everything that a chef made was eaten, it would be the best encouragement for him. Apart from Master, you are the first person to eat my cooking. I have to go, as it's getting quite late. If I don't reach my destination soon, I'm afraid I'll have to sleep at the inn. After eating so much, you should take a good rest."

“Nian Bing!” Nian Bing had just gotten up when Feng Nu suddenly called him. He eyed her with an inquiring look.

“From now on, can you frequently come here to see me? After Master left, it’s very lonely to be by myself. More importantly, after eating your cooking, I’m afraid that I won’t be able to endure drinking congee everyday.”

Seeing Feng Nu’s sparkling eyes, Nian Bing’s heart softened. He smiled and replied, “Rest assured! If there’s nothing important, I will come over to see you. I will also cook for you.”

Feng Nu smiled happily. “You must mean what you said. I’ll wait for your visit!”

In his mind, Nian Bing regretted being fooled by the formidable might of a woman’s charm. ‘No wonder Master once made such a mistake. However, since I’ve already promised, I have to do it. In any case, it’ll take at most about a month’s time for the True Sun knife to be made. I will leave after that. It’s better to distance myself from women in the future.’

Finally, Nian Bing left the Shui Huo Metal shop. He let out a long sigh, and touched the part of his chest where he kept his belongings. Everything was there, apart from the True Sun knife which he had left with Feng Nu. ‘The Grand Pavilion or the Pure Wind House? Which one should I choose? I should take a look before deciding. Master said that it was better to start working from the basics, and in case my cooking skills are revealed, I must depart immediately.’

The Grand Pavilion and the Pure Wind House were located in the center of Ice Snow City's most bustling district. The two restaurants were separated by a street, and were always competing fiercely against each other.

On the left of the wide main street of Ice Snow City, the Grand Pavilion was the most notable building, with extremely gorgeous decorations. It had four floors, each encompassing an area of several tens of thousands of square meters. The whole building mainly used dark red and golden colors to show its lavishness. A red carpet covered the floor from the hallway to the door. On both sides of the five-meter door stood three-meter tall stones. A golden plaque was suspended high above the door with two words inscribed on it : Grand Pavilion. There was a line written on each of the stones on either side of the door. On the left, 'Golden Flower wine, a beautiful delicacy', and on the right, 'Expensive Silver Sweet Spring, wonderful rare food'. On each side of the doorway, there were four young and pretty women dressed in red cheongsam, who were in charge of receiving the guests. They lead richly dressed guests into the restaurant. Distinguished people loved visiting this place the most because this was the only restaurant where they could fully display their status.

On the other side of the Grand Pavilion stood the ancient style Pure Wind House. Although it didn't have the lavishness of the Grand Pavilion, it had elegance, as the restaurant's name suggested. The multistoried building had three floors, all decorated in blue and green, creating a unique impression of serenity and elegance. At the entrance, there was a blue and green plaque inscribed with the words 'Pure Wind House' . It was obvious that the bold and vigorous characters were written by a master. A line was written on the pillars on each side of the

entrance. On the left, 'Convivial discussion of great scholars. Enjoy the taste of green tea', and on the right, 'Gathering of poets. , Experience the elegant vegetable dishes'. In this restaurant, the most frequent customers were scholars and intellectuals, which was the reason why it could compete with the Grand Pavilion. In addition, it also represented the meeting place of the mages' association. As the most noble profession, mages had a certain status in any country. What's more, each mages' association received the protection of the esteemed royal family of each important empire. Although the mages' associations in every empire didn't have much contact with each other, and acted independently in their own territories, they still held enough strength to sway the balance of power of the continent.

Chapter 10.2 – Pure Wind House

Nian Bing stood in the middle of the main street. He looked at the Grand Pavilion on the left and the Pure Wind House on the right. For a moment, he felt helplessly awkward. ‘In the end, which one should I go to ?’ In order to reach his dream, he was inclined to choose the Pure Wind House, which had a more refined style. As a child, he had been taught how to write by his father, thus, he couldn’t really be pegged as a commoner. But he wasn’t a scholar either, let alone a great scholar! Unfortunately, considering the lines “Convivial discussion of great scholars” and “Gathering of poets” written on the building, it seemed that his only choice was to go to the Grand Pavilion. After thinking about it, he turned around and walked to the Grand Pavilion on the left side.

At the Grand Pavilion’s entrance, eight young women were receiving guests. When Nian Bing walked in front of them, they were immediately attracted by his handsome appearance. Eight pairs of beautiful eyes darted on his body. Suddenly, Nian Bing felt a bit uncomfortable. Among the girls who watched the embarrassed Nian Bing, one of them couldn’t help but laugh. “Where did this country bumpkin come from? For him to be able to come this far is pretty good.”

Another one opened her mouth, but her words were more sarcastic. “Right! Absolutely marvelous! I’m sure someone with different kinds of interests would like it. It’s a pity that we’re not a brothel!”

Everyone who came to eat at the Grand Pavilion were high-ranked nobles wearing gorgeous clothes. With one look at Nian Bing’s appearance and attire, the young women at the entrance

knew he wasn't nobility. These women had already learned how to gauge someone's status long ago. Naturally, they started mocking Nian Bing.

Nian Bing was furious inside, however, he hadn't come here to start an enmity, so he forcefully restrained his fury. "Excuse me! Is the Grand Pavilion hiring a cook? I can properly make side dishes." This so-called side dish mainly used cut vegetables. After being mixed with all kinds of other ingredients in preparation for the main kitchen, it would then be processed by the main kitchen's cooking methods, thus becoming a dish.

The first young woman smiled. "Oh! It turns out you're a cook! Which cooking academy did you graduate from?"

"Cooking academy?" This was the first time Nian Bing had heard of this. Nowadays, chefs had to go to a school? He had heard his master say that the only requirement needed was the apprentice's ability.

The young woman looked at him in disdain. "You don't even know about cooking academies and yet you dare to come to the Grand Pavilion? You're still here?! Go away! This is not some place where anyone can come and go as they please!"

Just when Nian Bing was in a dilemma over what was the correct way to get hired, someone came out from the Grand Pavilion. It was a tall person in his forties. He had a fierce-looking face, giving people the impression of a fearful barbarian, and wore a purple satin chang pao. He was holding a fan in his right hand, constantly beating it on the palm of his left hand. Unexpectedly, the fan was

very big and measured 45.5 cm. From the way he hit with the fan, it looked heavy and it didn't seem to be made of wood. He was about to leave when his eyes fell on Nian Bing. In a few steps, he was near Nian Bing and asked, "What's going here?"

Previously, the eight young women were all smiling, but when they saw the middle-aged man, they quickly stood properly at their respective places with serious expressions. The young woman who had been talking to Nian Bing said, "Third manager, this person thinks our place hires temporary workers. However, he hasn't even heard of a cooking academy. I was just about to let him go."

The middle-aged man looked arrogantly at Nian Bing and said with impatience, "Quickly get lost! Stop obstructing my view! You, poor people are only worth cleaning my shoes."

Nian Bing's eyes flashed a cold light. The moment it had appeared, a melodious voice sounded from behind him. "Oh, my! Third Manager Liao is displaying his might again! I had no idea that mangy mutt Liao had started wearing shoes! Since when?"

Nian Bing turned around and only saw a young lady saddled on a horse. He wasn't aware of the length of time she had been behind him with that extremely tall horse. The mount she rode on resembled the war-horses he had previously seen with some of the knights from the Silver Feather knight regiment. Its whole body was snow-white, with not even a single stray hair. The young lady on the horse was wearing red clothes. She was a slender, healthy, and beautiful woman. She had long brown curly hair draping her shoulders and flowing on her back. Her forehead fully displayed her heroic features. At her waist hanged the red scabbard of a long

sword. Although it couldn't compare with the color of Feng Nu's scabbard, it still gave one the impression of a beautiful, lively color. A red clothed beauty on a snow white horse, standing in the middle of the main street – it immediately created a bright and beautiful scenery!

When Third Manager Liao heard that young lady mocking, he exploded in anger. Standing there, he shouted with hatred, "Xue Jing! Do you really believe that just because you have your father's backing that I won't dare to deal with you?"

Xue Jing jumped down from her horseback. She went besides Nian Bing. She looked at Third Manager Liao with a smile and said, "Really? Then, come here! Let me see how you are going to deal with me? Also, I wonder who it was last time that fell flat on his face? Grand Pavilion, humph! I spit on it!" Third Manager Liao obviously had an awful lot of misgivings towards the young lady Xue Jing. Although, his ugly face was already red with anger, he still didn't dare to do anything to her. He shifted his gaze to someone else. His anger abruptly exploded on another target. The fan in his hand suddenly shot out towards Nian Bing's shoulder. "Insignificant insect, you still haven't disappeared?!"

Nian Bing's heart was already filled with enmity. At the exact time he had heard the wind caused by Third Manager Liao's fan, he clearly understood what could happen. Nian Bing felt dread crawling up his spine, if he really got hit by that fan, his shoulder blade would shatter into tiny, little pieces. However, at this moment, he didn't lose his temper. He cunningly thought ahead and started scheming. Ah! He stumbled backward, fell and retreated behind the red-clothed young lady. The red-clothed young lady roused her ability and red dou qi suddenly burst out.

Bang! Third Manager Liao tumbled back several steps, almost falling on the ground. The red-clothed woman, Xue Jing, groaned in disdain and said, “Mangy mutt, you want to bite someone again?! Today, if I don’t discipline you, I am not called Xue Jing!”

“Miss Xue, on my behalf, please forget about this matter,” a loud and clear voice suddenly sounded out. Someone else had come out from the Grand Pavilion. It was a short and stout man who appeared to be around fifty years old. He was dressed in a golden chang pao with rounded, golden embroideries design. His face was shaped by excess fat. A bright light flickered from his tiny eyes, which were almost hidden by the surrounding fat.

“Boss, Xue Jing is causing trouble for us again. I want to teach her a lesson!” Third Manager Liao urgently turned to the short and fat man for help. The short and fat man’s brows wrinkled. He shouted in a cold voice as he used his palm to hit Third Manager Liao, who stumbled. “Go back in for me! You still haven’t lost enough face?” Third Manager Liao’s complexion slightly changed. He didn’t dare to say anything else. He gloomily returned inside the Grand Pavilion. When he went away, the short fat man’s face immediately turned into a smile. The fat on his smiling face unceasingly jiggled. “Miss Xue, we, the Grand Pavilion, and you, the Pure Wind House, should each mind our own business. Amiability makes you rich, we should keep it as such.”

Xue Jing sneered. “It looks like Head Manager came out this time. Good! Even if I beat a dog, I still need to give his master some face. Can you let Third Manager Liao bear in mind that if I see him bully someone again... Humph! ” She firmly turned and was about to leave when she saw Nian Bing behind her. She looked at his flustered expression and unhappily said, “Che! Look at you, so

lucky to grow so tall, but such a waste! Can you still be called a man?!”

Previously, Nian Bing had a somewhat good impression of Xue Jing, but, when he heard her domineering words, his previous good impression immediately decreased. He strongly wanted to say something back, but he heard Xue Jing continue, “You’re trying to find work. Come with me. We, the Pure Wind House, just happen to need someone to chop firewood.” As she finished speaking, she lead her white horse toward Pure Wind House’s side door.

‘Chopping firewood? Impossible! I chopped them for so many years. How can it be that I still have to chop firewood when I have just gone out on a journey?!’ Nian Bing couldn’t help but display a forced smile. He had already been bored stiff of having to chop firewood since a long time ago. However, he couldn’t reveal the circumstances pertaining to his cooking skills. Perhaps chopping firewood was the only way to enter the Pure Wind House. Helplessly, he followed Xue Jing into the Pure Wind House, through the side door.

When he passed through the side door, Nian Bing immediately smelled a faint fragrant scent which belong to a plant. The air felt more fresh and clean. As he looked at the surroundings, except for stoned paved lanes shaped into symbols, everything else was green. In the middle of all the green color, there was a small lake. The lake was not big. It was only three or four square meters. Above the lake, there were long corridors meandering between four pavilions, with a unique and extremely refined air.

“Hey! What are you looking at? Hurry up!” Xue Jing turned

towards Nian Bing impatiently. Now that she looked clearly at Nian Bing, she secretly thought, ‘Handsome is handsome, after all. But he doesn’t have any abilities. Heaven has bestowed this kind of appearance upon him in vain. Truly a waste!’

Two servants dressed in black clothes came over. One of them took the reins in Xue Jing’s hand and respectfully said, “Miss, you have returned. Great Mage Long Ling has already been waiting for you for half a day.”

“Big Sister Ling’er came? Very good! I was just thinking I should go look for her. Where is she?” Xue Jing’s face displayed her excitement.

The servant said, “ Great Mage Long Ling has reserved the Moon Pavilion.”

“Good! I’m going now. Oh! That’s right! This person is someone I rescued on the street and brought back with me. Send him to the firewood room and let him chop firewood. I remembered we needed someone for that.”

“Yes, Miss.” Xue Jing ran away at lightning speed. She disappeared from the corridor in a blink. The servant leading her horse left. The other servant used a different tone to address Nian Bing. “Come with me!”

Chapter 10.3 – Pure Wind House

Nian Bing voiced out his agreement. He followed the black clothed servant along the small houses made of stone and went deeper into Pure Wind House. The further he went in, the more it exuded a refined atmosphere. Each place was well decorated which showed the owner's originality. There was nothing missing in the arrangement of the regular and open-sided pavilions. It gave people an impression of beauty which was simple and elegant.

The servant led Nian Bing out to the front courtyard. They arrived next to a house and walked inside until they reached the door of a room. The servant respectfully said, "Head Steward, are you here?"

A clear and sonorous voice sounded out. "Come in."

The servant turned towards Nian Bing and gave him a meaningful glance. Then pushed the door open and entered with Nian Bing. The room was very clean. It was connected to two bedrooms. The interior of the bedrooms couldn't be seen. However, from the outside, it appeared to be brimming with a scholarly feel. Several calligraphy paintings were hung on the wall. On the wide wooden desk, with a carving of flowers, there were all kinds of stationery items. A man that appeared to be more than thirty years old sat behind the desk with his head lowered as he wrote something. He was dressed in a white chang pao. Although Nian Bing could only partly see the man's face, he appeared surprised. Even though this man's appearance was ordinary, he possessed an extraordinary temperament. In his simple and elegant appearance, there was grandeur. 'Head Steward, Pure Wind House's Head Steward, huh?'

The servant faced the middle-aged man and said, “Head Steward, Miss brought this man back. She said to let him go to the firewood house to help. I led him here so that you could register him.”

The white clothed man lifted his head to look at Nian Bing and their eyes met. From this man’s pleasant pair of eyes, which gleamed like brilliant rays, Nian Bing could see the two words “wise” and “farsighted.” In his mind he gloomily thought, ‘This person will not be easy to deal with.’

The white clothed man slightly blanked as he looked at Nian Bing’s handsome appearance and tall build. He asked, “What are you called? Where are you from? What can you do?”

Nian Bing replied, “I’m called Nian Bing. I originate from the Harmonic Flower Empire. I’ve been learning to cook for a while.”

The white clothed man slightly smiled before speaking. “Then, what cooking academy did you attend?”

‘Again with the cooking academy. If I had the opportunity, I truly want to go and see what theses cooking academies are teaching.’ Shaking his head, Nian Bing told the truth. “I didn’t attend any cooking academy.”

The white clothed man spoke. “Little Four, take him to the place where he can get his uniform. Do as the Young Lady said and bring him to the firewood house to work as it was intended. If you do well, I can reconsider grooming you into a junior chef.”

Little Four respectfully said, “Yes, Head Steward. You, follow me.”

After Nian Bing changed into the cyan colored uniform Little Four gave him to try on, he was led into a small courtyard in the rear court. Inside the small courtyard, many piles of wood could be seen. Some were already properly chopped and neatly stacked together. Beyond the area of the pile of firewood, there was a shed. It was clear that they fear the firewood would get soaked by the rainwater. Just as Little Four entered the small courtyard, he started yelling, “Uncle Li, Uncle Li! I brought a new person.”

A loud and clear voice sounded out. “Ah! A new person came. That’s good. My weary old body can finally relax a bit.” Followed by his voice, a man came out wearing the same cyan colored uniform as Nian Bing. It was a tall old man more than fifty years of age. He had a common appearance with not many wrinkles on his face and carried a hatchet in his hand. His face was bearing a smile. He seemed very easy to get along with.

Uncle Li’s gaze fell on Nian Bing. He looked at Nian Bing up and down, sizing him several times. “Hum! Your body looks pretty good. I just don’t know if your body can endure the hardships. The firewood that the entire Pure Wind House uses, comes from here and is all chopped by me. Young fellow, if you’re not capable of finishing the work, you have to do overtime.”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “Greetings Uncle Li. You can rest assured it’s not a problem for me to do manual labor. I came from a family with hardships.”

Uncle Li smiled and said, "That's good! Little Four, you can go back. Just hand him over to me. In the future, with a new employee like you, we have to strive hard together so that I can avoid finding others to come and help. We must provide for the kitchen first and foremost. Come! I'll bring you to your place."

Little Four left. Nian Bing followed Uncle Li to a house in a corner of the small courtyard. The house had three rooms. Uncle Li said, "Originally, the workload of supplying chop firewood needed three people to be accomplished. Ever since that Grand Pavilion opened, it divided part of our business and as a result, there's just me, one person, carrying on all the work. At times when I have more work than I could handle, I had to find someone capable for help. You stay in the right side of the house. The room in the middle is a mess and I'm not good at cleaning.

Even someone who just chopped firewood had his own room. 'The Pure Wind House's way of operating is indeed pretty good.' Nian Bing thought so as he walked to the right side of the house with his bundle wrapped in a piece of cloth. He put it down and immediately walked back out.

Uncle Li was waiting for him at the entrance. "Young fellow, have you ever chopped firewood before?"

Nian Bing chose to nod his head. He could be considered a veteran when it came to chopping firewood.

Uncle Li smiled and said, "You can be at ease since it's unlikely I

will bully a new employee. In the future, we'll split the work between us. All of us at Pure Wind House have to pay particular attention to our work, even us, wood choppers. The logs are delivered by someone. When it comes to chopping, you have to make sure to cut them as evenly as possible. You should watch what it looks like." While speaking, he pointed his finger next to a pile of wood. "That's just today's work which I'll finish next. You can just stay and watch. You will start working tomorrow and help share the workload. Oh, right! What is your name? Who recruited you here?"

Nian Bing briefly narrated everything that happened earlier on the main street. Listening until the end of Nian Bing's story, Uncle Li smiled and said, "Although the Young Lady has a violent temperament, she still possesses an excellent character. You should be at ease. Even though we only chop firewood, our salary is still pretty good with provided food and accommodation. Furthermore, our income every month is one gold coin. It could be say that chopping firewood is the most blessed work. What's more is that as long as we chop all the required firewood every day, the rest of our time can be regarded as free time. We can go outside for strolls using the back door."

Nian Bing smiled at Uncle Li introducing Pure Wind House while examining the surroundings. With Uncle Li's explanations, he gradually had a rough understandings of this place. Pure Wind House occupied an area a little bit smaller than the Grand Pavilion, yet, by relying on the use of various elegant sceneries, they were able to keep their customers. If compare with the Grand Pavilion's number of retained customers, it was a bit more. From the front of the firewood house, the Kitchen was not too far away. Every day, the Kitchen would send someone over to take the firewood. Only during meal times, would we see those chefs coming. According to

Uncle Li, the meals that the servants of Pure Wind House ate were pretty good, even though it was made by junior chefs. It also had meat and vegetables, which was a generous bonus.

“Uncle Li, I’m chopping next. You can rest for a moment.” Nian Bing took the hatchet from Uncle Li’s hand and then took a log. The hatchet started to sink into the wood. He slowly descended the hatchet down several times in succession and eight identical pieces of firewood was produce. Uncle Li praised him. “You really are capable, Nian Bing. Looking at how skilled your hands are, you must have practiced chopping a lot of times. When I think back, the Young Lady truly has given me a good helper.” Having Nian Bing as a helper, he was very happy and even his speech changed a lot.

Nian Bing wily smiled and said, “If I calculate, I have chopped firewood for eight years. Uncle Li, I heard from Little Four and the Young Lady’s conversation about someone called the Great Mage Long Ling looking for her. A Great Mage must be very powerful.”

Uncle Li lightly nodded his head with sincerity and said, “Of course they are powerful, and not just the normal kind of powerful. With the purpose of overtaking the Ice God Pagoda’s position, our Ice Moon Empire’s Mage Association’s headquarters has established itself in Ice Snow city. I heard that Miss Long Ling is the daughter of the Mage Association’s president. Despite her very young age, she seems to have already reached the Great Mage’s realm. Our Young Lady is on good terms with her as her confidante.”

Ice Moon Empire’s Mage Association’s headquarters was in Ice

Snow city. For Nian Bing, the information that just came was extremely useful. Although he didn't know what level his magic power had reached, he should also be close to the realm of Great Mage. Right now, what he lacked the most were Ice Magic books. Ice spells were extremely significant since their magic power was high. Even the spell activation didn't affect the power. Although he relied on fire magic spells, he was able to guess some of the low level ice magic spells. However, each spell above third rank had their own characteristics. It was in vain to have ice magic ice from head to toe if one didn't have any spells. This kind of feeling wasn't comfortable. If he could go into the Mage Association to look at the Magic books, it would greatly help him.

With Nian Bing's assistance, it didn't take very long to complete today's task of chopping firewood. Previously, when Uncle Li was chopping firewood, Nian Bing had carefully observed the speed he used to chop them. Therefore, the time he took was maintained to almost the same as Uncle Li. Although the cut firewood was even, it was not at all similar to the time in Peach Blossom forest where he was seeking some sort of perfection. After waiting half the time it normally took to chop wood, two people dressed in the white uniforms of cooks came to take away a portion of the firewood.

Uncle Li laughed out loud and said, "You are so different, truly a hardworking young man. Your speed of chopping is not much different than my usual time. Look at the sky, it's getting late. It's almost time to eat supper."

Nian Bing said, "Uncle Li, I won't be eating here today. I barely arrived at Ice Snow city. I want to walk around and buy some items for my everyday use on the way."

Uncle Li was a frank, straightforward person and didn't have many questions. He informed Nian Bing where the back door was located and allowed him to go out.

When he left Pure Wind House, Nian Bing's eyes flashed. Since he already knew that the Ice Moon empire's Mage Association's headquarters was here, he had to go take a look first. At least, he would try to inquire what the conditions were to be able to read the information there. Full of anticipation, he followed the main street and casually tried to ask someone where the Mage Association was located.

Chapter 11.1 – Ice-Snow Storm Variation

The Pure Wind House was in the middle of the city while the Mage Association situated south of the city. Having a general idea of the direction, Nian Bing strolled by and visited the city along the way. At this moment, the sky had gradually darkened, and he arrived as night fell.

Since he couldn't use magic, his speed was not much different from an ordinary person; it took him one hour by foot. He could see a tall building not far away; it was some kind of building with a spire-like structure. The building was taller than the Grand Pavilion, and it seemed very unusual near the roof since there was a pointed object facing toward the main street in the shape of a humongous golden hexagram. It was no question that this was what he wanted to find. With anticipation, Nian Bing accelerated his pace toward the Mage Association.

Right at that moment, the sound of horse hooves was suddenly heard behind him. From the sound of it, he determined that the horse's speed was not fast at all. Nevertheless, it was unusual; as the sharp and clear sound of the metal hooves stamping on the ground had a certain rhythm to it, just like some kind of music. During his childhood, Nian Bing once heard his father say that only the best horses had the ability to run around with a set rhythm. Curious, he turned his body around to take a quick look. He only saw a young lady saddled on a large mahogany horse coming exactly towards him. The young lady on the horse wore a blue colored mage's gown that didn't have an embroidered symbol on it. She had long purple hair neatly combed behind her back, along with a beautiful and refined appearance. Nian Bing inwardly contemplated, thinking that if he were to compare her to Feng Nu, this seemingly delicate young lady's appearance surprisingly wouldn't

be beneath Feng Nu. Her big black eyes was facing in the direction of the Mage Association while displaying a gentle smile.

Most of the passerby on both sides of the street had recognize her. They smiled as they made way for her. Although the young lady's horse didn't travel fast, compared to Nian Bing who was on foot, it was a bit more faster. At first he was in front, but he still reached the Mage Association after her.

A man wearing a yellow mage's gown came out of the Association, and turned to help the young lady leading the horse. He cordially said, "Ling'er, you finally came back. What took you so long?"

Ling'er softly smiled and said, "Xue Jing insisted to make me stay for supper. Senior knows that I am most fond of the Pure Wind House's food. That's the reason I came back a little late tonight. Have all of you eaten yet?"

The man smiled and said, "We already ate. Come! Let's go in."

When Nian Bing heard the two words, "Ling'er", his mind stirred. 'Don't tell me this young lady was that Great Mage the bossy Miss Xue Jing was meeting with? Looking at her manners, Ling'er and Xue Jing's temperaments are as different as black and white. One is alert and the other is calm; they should exchanged their names to match the other. Since she's the daughter of the Mage Association's president, I should easily obtain the answers if I give it a try and ask her.' Full of anticipation, he quickly hastened his steps and took advantage of the fact that Long Ling'er and her senior from the Association still haven't left the place and were

just in front. He said, “Excuse me! Could this place be the Mage Association’s headquarters?”

Long Ling’er looked curiously at Nian Bing and couldn’t help pursing her mouth into a smile when she saw him hurrying.

The man gave Nian Bing a glance and arrogantly said, “You’re correct. This place is the Mage Association’s headquarters. What business do you have?”

Nian Bing asked, “I want to ask what the requirements are to be able to read the Association’s books of magic?”

The man’s brows slightly creased. He replied, “The Association’s books need an intermediary to be read. Moreover, the request needs to be according to one’s rank. You cannot bypass your rank to read the Association’s materials. Or are you perhaps a mage?”

Nian Bing quickly nodded and said, “Yes. I’m an ice mage, but I don’t know whether or not I can read the Association’s material.” He already reached the fire mage eighth rank long ago. For eighth rank magic, it needed a highly experienced Magic Scholar to be used. Right now, what he needed the most were some ice magic spells. Naturally, he would say he was an ice mage.

When Nian Bing claimed to be an ice mage, the man’s expression relaxed somewhat. “Did you join another empire’s Association? If you have already join another empire’s Association, we can’t welcome you here. If that is not the case, then you can come into the Association and receive a test. Depending on your

performances during the test, the Association can award you with the corresponding ensignia. By looking at your appearance, I assume that you're a mage whose rank can't be very high." Although the man's speech was somewhat harsh, what he stated was merely the cold facts. Being a mage is an extremely money-wasting profession, especially in the initial stage. If there was no first-rate gem to assist, it would be very difficult to sense the existence of the magic elements. In addition, the price of these gems remained high on the Venerate Light Continent, as it is in whichever empire they're sold from. It's not something that can simply be afforded by ordinary people. To experience, let alone to practice magic it required a teacher. It would be very difficult to succeed without a wise teacher to show the directions. It's no wonder the man was somewhat suspicious.

Nian Bing didn't care about joining or not joining the Association. As long as he could learn the magic spells he needed, it would be enough. He hurriedly said, "Right now, I haven't joined any Association. Would it be possible to trouble you to let me undertake the test? If I may say so, I really wish to join the Ice Moon Empire's Mage Association."

The man gave a glance at Long Ling'er who was beside him. Right at that moment, Long Ling'er also looked at him. "Senior, please help him. Looking at his appearance, he must have entered here from the outside. Currently, the Association members have gradually been getting fewer; we need to recruit more fresh blood. There are only several elders left in the Association. If his potential is not bad, maybe we can gain more power."

The man slightly nodded and said, "Anyway, today is already somewhat late. I'll see about it tomorrow. Boy, come here

tomorrow morning.”

In his thoughts, Nian Bing wanted to stay in Pure Wind House tomorrow and investigate their specialty dish. Therefore he was short on time. He couldn't help but ask the man, “Esteemed Great Mage, may I ask you if it is possible for you to accommodate me? Tomorrow, I still have some things to do during the day. Only right now, do I have the time to take the test.”

Although this man was Long Ling'er's senior, his aptitude was limited. Currently, he was an Advanced Earth mage who have yet to reach the Great Mage's realm. Hearing Nian Bing call him Great Mage, immediately lightened his mood. He thought about how his Junior Sister who preferred to help out other people, ‘If this time I help this boy, maybe her good impressions of me will grow bigger.’ As he mused about it in anticipation, his face displayed a faint smile as he spoke, “Since you came from far away, we can't just let you return like this. Follow us inside.”

Long Ling'er faintly smiled and said, “Senior, I knew you were the best.”

Receiving such praise from his beloved Junior Sister immediately put the man in a very good mood as he smiled back at Long Ling'er. Pulling the horse along, he took the lead and went inside ahead of them. Nian Bing gave Long Ling'er a grateful look before he hastily followed them inside the Mage Association.

From the outside, the Mage Association's building looked immense, but it was merely outside. After passing through the door, the interior had a surface similar to a drill ground. The area

was so wide that even the Great Pavilion and the Pure Wind House combined would still be smaller. It really deserved to be called the Ice Moon Empire's Mage Association's headquarter. In the immediate surroundings, there was a reception counter with some kind of pointed construct connect to it.

After the man handed Long Ling'er's horse to a servant, he lead Nian Bing to enter the left side of the pointed construct. He walked to the side and asked Nian Bing, "What is your name? What's your ice mage's realm?"

Nian Bing quickly answered, "I am called Nian Bing. Truthfully, I practice by myself. So, I also don't know what kind of realm I have reached. Great Mage, I still haven't asked you, what is your esteemed name?"

The man indifferently replied, "I'm called Shi Jiu. This is the testing place. The Association has stipulated that any mage tested requires to be evaluated by a Magic Scholar elder to be able to advance. You, wait here. I will go look for a few elders and see which of them are currently not in meditation. If they have already started meditating, then I can't disturb them anymore. You'd just have to come back tomorrow if that were the case." As he finished speaking, he went to Long Ling'er and explained the situation before walking through a side-door.

Long Ling'er slightly smiled and said, "Although Senior's temperament is a bit eccentric, his character is very good. If his words had somewhat offend you, I ask you to please forgive him." As she spoke, she looked at him before proceeding further inside.

Hearing Long Ling'er softly say those words in a low voice made Nian Bing's heart felt particularly comfortable. He felt that, compared to Xue Jing, it was better to be associated with her. He smiled. "Great Mage, there's no need for you to be modest. For this matter, I'll have to trouble you. I had always practice magic, but from the beginning to the end, I fail to grasp the main points. That's why this time I want to learn a bit in the Association. If I have the opportunity, I would like to ask you for your guidance."

Chapter 11.2 – Ice-Snow Storm Variation

Long Ling'er slightly smiled and said, "I wouldn't dare give you guidance. You don't need to call me Great Mage either since I have yet to take the advancement test. My father ordered me not to. When we're alone together, he always tells me that he won't allow me to take the test, so that he won't lose face, as I haven't yet reached the Great Mage realm. My father is very difficult to deal with. If you pass the test, I can take you to meet my father. Later, you may just call me by my name. My name is Long Ling'er, everyone calls me Ling'er. By the way, both you and I are Ice mages. Don't you have a mage's gown? If you don't wear a mage's gown, how can you expect people to recognize you as a mage?"

Nian Bing assumed a pained expression and said, "Since my childhood, I have constantly aspired to be a mage. Unfortunately, my family was very poor. I could only hope for a chance to learn magic. One day, I met a mage by chance. He told me I have an ice attribute physique and he taught me a meditation technique. I started cultivating according to his method. Later, I came to possess magic power. That mage only taught me meditation, he didn't teach me any magic spells. Therefore, it's highly possible that I'm still the lowest level ice mage."

At this moment, they had already passed through the doors and arrived into a big lounge. Due to the pointed architecture, this lounge appeared to be extremely tall. From left to right, the size of the area measured two hundred square meters. All kinds of murals were painted on the walls. Most of the paintings depicted masters wearing mage's gowns and a few magic items. In the center of the big lounge, there was a circle on the floor reaching five meters in diameter. Within the circle, there was a six pointed star, each corner having a different color: white, blue, red, green, yellow and

gold. These colors symbolized the six mainstream types of magic.

When Long Ling'er heard the way Nian Bing spoke, her eyes immediately displayed her sympathy. She comforted him, "It doesn't matter. The achievements of a mage rely on his magic power as his foundation. The ability to cultivate magic power with meditation is the most important. As long as your magic power is sufficiently large, by combining it with magic spells, you will naturally be able to utilize higher rank magic. As for the mage's gown, you don't need to worry about it. We can simply give you one after you've passed the test. Anyway, you need to be an intermediate mage or higher in order to join our association. If not, you can only keep cultivating."

Nian Bing nodded and thought, 'By now, I should have at least reached the rank of advanced mage. Dealing with this test shouldn't be a big problem. Later, even if I can't have advanced ice magic spells, I can still get one or two rank four spells.' "Miss Ling'er, I truly have to thank you. If I hadn't run into you and senior, I still wouldn't know how to enter the Mage Association."

Long Ling'er smiled. "There is nothing to thank me for. Even if you hadn't meet us, you could have later entered the Association after your identity as a mage was determined and someone would have received you. Oh! In a moment, you'll have to put in lots of effort, since no one can help you during the test. Everything relies on your own strength."

Nian Bing firmly nodded and said, "I will definitely pass this test."

Right at that moment, Nian Bing and Long Ling'er turned around at the sound of footsteps. They only saw Shi Jiu walking in with an old man who was wearing a blue mage's gown. The old man's hair was completely white and he looked as if he was in his sixties or seventies. On the left side of his chest was an embroidered symbol that Nian Bing knew too well; it was the same symbol his father had as a Magic Scholar. It was clear that the old man was a Water Magic Scholar and not an Ice Magic Scholar.

Shi Jiu took the initiative to walk toward Nian Bing and said, "Your luck is pretty good. Today, Teacher Li De has yet to enter meditation. He's a Water Magic Scholar. Why haven't you greeted him yet?" In the mage's profession, status was extremely important. If there was a difference in rank, it was necessary to bow according to etiquette. Nian Bing had already heard his father mention this. He absolutely respected those who were strong. So he hurriedly bowed to the old man and greeted him. "Good evening, honorable Magic Scholar."

The old man didn't seem to be fond of talking. He merely let out an 'En! in response.

Shi Jiu respectfully said to the old Magic Scholar, "Teacher Li De, is it possible for you to begin right now?"

The old man looked at Nian Bing up and down, sizing him. He then extended his hand toward Nian Bing and spoke, "Quickly circulate your magic power and send me your strongest attack. First, I need to know what level your magic power has reached."

Nian Bing made an approving sound in response. He extended his

right hand and grasped the old Magic Scholar's withered hand. He very carefully controlled the ice magic power and separated it out from the Ice and Fire whirlpool within his body. Ice magic appeared and attacked the old mage. At the same time when he sent out an attack with his ice magic power, he also curbed down his fire magic power as much as possible, in order to avoid the other party from sensing it. He didn't wish for others to know about him possessing two kinds of magic.

With the aid of his spirit force, the ice-cold magic power was pushed down and transmitted through his arm, charging right into Magic Scholar Li De. From the moment Nian Bing's magic power moved into his arm, the magical elements in the atmosphere caused a strong suction force because of the permanent rotation of his magic power. Involuntarily, the attraction of some ice elements in the atmosphere attacked Li De.

A blue light radiated from Nian Bing's body and fully encompassed him. With this layer of magic light, he had already proved that he had the strength of an intermediate mage.

Suddenly, Li De opened his half-closed eyes. The look he gave Nian Bing contained some astonishment. He perceived within his arm the unceasing magic power charging into him. His eyes displayed more and more astonishment. He clearly discovered that this young man wasn't much older than Long Ling'er. Unexpectedly, the essence of the magic power that was being transmitted was exceptionally pure, without any trace of impurities, which was even more praiseworthy. Nian Bing's magic power was extremely solid. After diffusing it from within his body, his ice magic power was very difficult to use, so the solidified ice-cold air dissolved. Moreover, by the time he had finished

transmitted his ice magic power, it was slightly rolling forward just like the endless large river Chang Jiang. Even with a Magic Scholar's strength, it was somewhat strenuous to withstand this kind of peculiar ice magic power.

“Good!” Li De suddenly started talking. Nian Bing's right hand slightly trembled. He only felt a gentle stream of air similar to that of great waves clashing against his hand from Li De's hand. Li De's brows slightly crease when he watched Nian Bing. “Tell me, who is your teacher?”

Nian Bing lowered his head and said, “Esteemed Magic Scholar, I don't have a teacher. I once met a mage whose identity remained unknown and only managed to learn meditation from him. Afterwards, by myself, I kept fumbling around finding my own path for my cultivation. Do you think I've passed the test?”

Li De's eyes lighted up in astonishment. He spoke, “Passing or not the test will depend on your performance later. Right now, you can be very proud of your magic. Furthermore, the magic you used was the highest level of magic that I had yet received. You have to remember that magic control is an extremely important part of magic. If you can merely release your magic, but can't effectively control it, I have to say that you can't become a qualified mage.”

Apart from his father, this was the first time Nian Bing had received the guidance of another mage. He quickly nodded lightly. He didn't dare to use his Ice and Snow Goddess's stone. He just lifted up his hand and loudly chanted, “Oh Great Ice and Snow Goddess! Please lend me your wrath, deliver us to the lost, holy shore!”

Hearing his magic spell, Li De showed a “this is nothing” expression while Long Ling’er and Shi Jiu displayed a look of surprise. Long Ling’er exchanged with Shi Jiu. “Ah! Senior, this must be the Snowstorm spell! Snowstorm is classified as a rank four spell, with a large area of ice magic accumulation. I can control it, but not for a long time. If he can also use this magic, his magic power should not be below mine. It looks like we did the correct thing by letting him come in to take the test.”

Shi Jiu’s face was somewhat ugly as he groaned, “We can’t say for sure. It also depends on if he has the ability to be able to perfectly put that kind of magic into use. He barely recited the incantation, as if he wanted to stake it down. Every apprentice had something to use as a medium, but what does he have?”

As the spell was activated, suddenly, the temperature of the air rapidly dropped. Blue dots of light could clearly be seen condensing around Nian Bing’s body. Although he couldn’t use the Ice and Snow Goddess’s Sigh as a staff, after so many years of cultivation together with the Ice and Goddess’s stone, a connection had formed between them since a long time ago. This allowed him to indirectly use the precious stone with only a small difference in power.

The dots of blue light hovered around Nian Bing’s body and rays of light flickered in succession as they revolved and rotated around him at high velocity. Snowstorm was the rank four ice magic Nian Bing was most confident in. As the Snowstorm whirled, inwardly, the source of his ice and fire magic power had taken a different route in order to achieve the same results as average magicians. Meanwhile, the opposing magic power made it possible for him to

save a bit of magic power.

Chapter 11.3 – Ice-Snow Storm Variation

Snowflakes appeared in succession. Sensing the drop in the surrounding temperature, Li De's complexion became solemn. From inside his chest, he pulled out a small and exquisite magic staff measuring only 20 centimeters and quietly chanted a few sentences. Immediately, many large water ripples were produced in front of him. This wasn't a simple water wall spell. In fact, it was an advanced water wall spell. It was a rank 5 pure defensive water magic, Water Mirror spell. Not only was it capable of greatly raising the defense, it could also counterattack the opponent's magic to a certain extent.

At last, the Snowstorm took shape. It was beginning to revolve at high-speed with Nian Bing as its center. The velocity of the rotation became faster and faster. Unexpectedly, Nian Bing's silhouette was gradually disappearing. A blue light radiated from Nian Bing's eyes as his right hand pointed forward. The Snowstorm condensed and turned into a small tornado which flew towards the Magic Scholar Li De.

Looking at this from the side, Shi Jiu with disdain said, "Junior Sister, do you remember what I told you earlier? How can his Snowstorm be called a Snowstorm when it only affects such a small area?"

Long Ling'er displayed a strange look in her eyes. "No, Senior, you're wrong. Father once said that not only can the Snowstorm attack a large area and transport the Ice mage through the air for a short period of time, but it can also become a completely pure offensive magic given that you have very good control and sufficient magic power. With this Snowstorm being purely

offensive, his capacity has been fully displayed with the use of its formidable power. Father told me to wait until I could reach this kind of mastery, then it would be possible for me to tread onto the path of a Magic Scholar.”

Looking at the whole area completely condensed by the Snowstorm, Li De’s expression finally changed a few times. He grasped his magic staff and waved it once again while repeatedly chanting out loud. Two Water Mirror spells appeared in front of him with the purpose of obstructing the Snowstorm.

When Nian Bing’s condensed Snowstorm was about to reach Li De. The charging Snowstorm was unexpectedly halted. At that moment all three of them became astounded, the Snowstorm had suddenly soared. The whole vortex rose horizontally like a gigantic whip and descended toward Li De’s position.

When all was said and done, Li De didn’t immerse himself in several decades of magic for nothing. Even when thrown into confusion, he didn’t panic. Instead, he took a step forward with his magic staff pointed upwards. He forcefully raised three Water Mirror spell above his head, welcoming the Snowstorm’s attack.

The Snowstorm drew out from Nian Bing’s Ice and Fire source of magic power, making every snowflakes as sharp as a knife. Mirrors could reflect light and even reflect energy, but when it came to a faceoff with sharp blades, it could only be a confrontation of pure strength. An ear-piercing friction continuously sounded out as the first Water Mirror quickly shattered under the Snowstorm’s high-speed spinning. Immediately, it came into contact with the second Water Mirror. Even when the Snowstorm arrived to Li De’s last

line of defense, unexpectedly, the power didn't weaken. With the exception of the snowflakes becoming a bit sparse, the firepower of the Snowstorm didn't vary the slightest. The hurricane affected the whole lounge, giving Shi Jiu and Long Ling'er no other choice but to retreat to the edge of the lounge and cast their own defensive magic. At this very moment, Nian Bing had already used his magic power to his extreme limit.

Li De's eyes released a brilliant light as his body suddenly distorted. His last Water Mirror soon collapsed under the assault of Nian Bing's valiant Snowstorm, and his body was immediately drilled through by the barrage of snowflakes. Everyone cried out in alarm. A blue billow appeared, Nian Bing's whole body trembled as he was sent back several steps and almost fell on the ground. Quietly, the Snowstorm faded away with the great waves, and apart from the extremely low temperature, everything else returned to normal in the lounge.

Li De reappeared not too far from Nian Bing. Seemingly in deep thought, he said, "How surprising! To think that a rank 4 magic can pressure me into using the rank 7 Water Blossom Harmonizing with the Heavens. Young man, your magic control is almost on par with mine. It's a pity that your magic power has only just reached the realm of Great Mage."

On the side, Long Ling'er exclaimed in surprise. "Uncle Li De, you're saying he's a Great Mage?"

Li De slightly nodded and replied, "Apart from him, you are the first child to have such good innate skill. Being able to cultivate to this degree at such a young age is already difficult. His magic

power is about the same as yours. However, his magic control is already much better. Clearly, his spirit force extremely powerful. It's already approaching the level of Magic Scholar. He can receive the title of Great Mage. The reason why your father doesn't let you take the test has to do with your magic control being insufficient. After you strive with great effort into that aspect, you can soon strive to become a genuine Great Mage. Child, how old are you?" The final question was meant for Nian Bing. His tone was already more gentle.

Although Nian Bing consumed a great amount of ice magic power, his spirit power was still powerful. He could still support himself by drawing upon his Ice and Fire magic source, and so, he didn't feel greatly weakened. In a respectful tone, he answered, "Honorable Magic Scholar, this year I am eighteen years old."

Li De's eyes brightened momentarily. "Eighteen years old! You're saying that you're only a year younger than Ling'er. It appears I can only use "genius" to describe you. Ling'er is nineteen years old and even after this event, she can barely enter the realm of Great Mage and you're saying you're younger than her. An eighteen years old Great Mage. Hahahaha! Looks like, we, the Ice Moon Empire's Mage Association, will produce a promising young person. Come back tomorrow. I believe the president will certainly want to see what the genius looks like."

Although Nian Bing really wanted to read the ice magic spells books tonight, he also knew at this moment he couldn't act with undue haste. He respectfully gave his salutations the Magic Scholar Li De. "I'll trouble you then."

On the side, Shi Jiu's face constantly changed as the light in his eyes continuously shifted. He absolutely didn't anticipate that this commonly dressed youngster could unexpectedly possessed the strength of a Great Mage. Compared to the praised genius Long Ling'er, he was still able exceed her a bit. The jealousy was affecting his thoughts, turning him speechless and his complexion ashen. At this time, Nian Bing turned towards Shi Jiu and Long Ling'er and said, "Many thanks for both of your help! Then, I'll come back tomorrow." As he finished speaking, he had walk towards the two of them with a hint of smile. After that, he turned and walked outside. Long Ling'er looked back at Nian Bing's silhouette. Suddenly an odd feeling rose in her heart. From when she was small until now, she was always the princess of the Association, like a moon surrounded and cupped by all the stars, praised as a genius mage. She never thought that a youngster in plain clothes had a magic cultivation that was a bit stronger than hers. Thus, she didn't feel any jealousy. Instead, toward Nian Bing, she was very curious. She was curious as to how he had cultivated to this kind of degree, and wanted to know how he accomplished it. She suspected that he had grown up with a magic stone. Since the age of five, her father had formally taught her magic in order to make her experienced, and quickly understand the true essence of its nature. Although she was only nineteen years old this year, in term of magic, she already had fourteen years of cultivation. In addition, her comprehension was extremely outstanding, helping her succeed until now.

"Ling'er, do you feel very surprised? You must realize, there are many people outside and the outside world has its own principles." Li De looked at Long Ling with deep meaning contained in his eyes.

Long Ling lightly nodded and said, "Earlier, his use of the

Snowstorm formidable power was truly great! Previously, I only heard Father talked about it and didn't expect the use of the Snowstorm's close range flight to have that much of a strong firepower. Uncle Li De, your magic also seemed extremely exhausting. Just now, I didn't see you chanting the spell to cast that rank 7 magic. I don't know when I, Ling'er, will be able to reach that kind of level."

Li De wryly smiled and said, "Are you speaking in jest of me? The one who wants to stop talking is me. Even your father won't be able to activate a rank 7 magic without chanting. I was extremely careless before. I only used low level magic to defend. By the time I could react, I already ran out of time to chant any spell. I could only use a rank 7 scroll. Ah! My very expensive scroll in a few moments... It was completed with your father's help, if I were to go and sell it, the value would be at least 100 purple coins. Nevertheless, a one's life doesn't have a market price. I'm going to go look for your father now. I must inform him of this matter."

Shi Jiu was somewhat discontented and said, "Teacher Li De, this matter has this much importance? Perhaps, just a moment ago, is it possible for that young man to also have used a scroll?"

Li De calmly spoke, "If I can't differentiate between him constantly using scrolls or not, then I'm also an impostor Magic Scholar. Magic can be activated with scrolls. However, magic control can't be faked. I can give you a Snowstorm scroll. Can you successfully exercise control over it like he did? Not only that, you have to be able to gather the Snowstorm in a way that could be compressed and still be able to control its sudden change of direction. Although he is almost proficient enough, he is still a bit short of being a Magic Scholar. His magic control ability is

powerful compared to the current Great Mages on the continent as they are already lacking. I truly don't know what kind of practice he has had to do from his young age to attain this level." As he finished speaking about it, he looked at Shi Jiu with a gaze containing a deep meaning. Then, he turned around and left.

With Li De gone, Ling'er sobered from her previous surprise. She mumbled, "Uncle Li De hasn't smiled for a very long time. But he was smiling during the test just now."

Shi Jiu unhappily said, "I saw. Right now, Teacher Li De is also somewhat... Forget it! Nevermind about him. Junior Sister, let's go. How about I accompany you for a midnight snack?"

Ling'er shooked her head and said, "No, Senior. Today, I just discovered that with my current magic cultivation, there is still a huge gap I need to fill. Among my peers, I am not superior in the least. I want to make the most of it with cultivation. I'll strive hard and soon catch up to Nian Bing. You should also cultivate more. See you tomorrow. I don't know if Father will meet Nian Bing tomorrow." She finished speaking, greeted Shi Jiu, and floated away.

Chapter 12.1 – Magic Reaper

Shi Jiu was infatuated as he watched Long Ling's back disappeared. In his heart, he inwardly pondered on the countermeasures to deal with the situation. He was almost ten years older than Long Ling and practically watched her grow up. From her childhood until the present, his heart already lusted after his Junior Sister's body. The appearance of Nian Bing made his heart feel an impending crisis. Nian Bing and Long Ling's ages were almost the same. Nian Bing's features were more handsome than his and, in addition, his original magic strength was exceptional for his age. Except for his family background that couldn't be compared, Shi Jiu felt incomparable to Nian Bing since there were not much to be compare. 'My Junior Sister is such a beauty. If I let him join the Association, I fear he will want to chase after her. I just can't easily allow it. It seems that I have to think of a way to deal with this situation.'

Nian Bing's mood was very good when he left the Mage Association. He knew that an evaluation from a Magic Scholar couldn't be wrong. He didn't expected to have already reached the level of a Great Mage, while possessing two opposing types of magic at the same time. If he were to make use of two rank 4 magics, he will be much more outstanding when compared to the average Great Mage. Even though he was excited, he wasn't arrogant at all. He knew that although the gap between Great Mage and Magic Scholar was only a level, the difference was still extremely wide, similar to a chasm. Nian Bing clearly remembered his father words when he said that he reached the Great Mage's realm at the age of 24. He then had to painstakingly cultivate until the age of 35 years old before he broke through the Magic Scholar's realm with the help of the Flame God's Stone. It could already be considered quite a fast cultivation speed. On the continent, most of

the young Magic Scholars can't be compared to his father. In fact, breaking through from Great Mage to Magic Scholar also required someone to have an excellent opportunity to do so. Without chance, it was possible to bitterly cultivate more than ten years before getting promoted from Intermediate Mage to Advanced Mage. To an Advanced Mage, the gap between it and Great Mage is the same as between the rank of Great Mage and Magic Scholar. However, if an Advanced Mage were to cross that realm, he would then join the ranks of the powerful mages. Unfortunately, he would have the same social standing of a warrior if he was unable to do so. The strongest Great Mages could use rank 5 large-scale magic whereas Magic Scholars could use rank 8 magic. From rank 5 to rank 8, that was the characteristics of the rank promotion.

Nian Bing wasn't in a hurry to return to Pure Wind House. He bought a black chang pao and a children's skull mask that was sold on the streets. He moved to the side street with eyes that revealed a faint cold light. It was almost time for him to return to Pure Wind House. As he walked into the dim corner of the street, using his black chang pao to blend in the darkness, his right hand reached for the Flame God's Stone near his chest. At a corner, he came to an halt. From afar, he could see the entrance of the Pure Wind House and the Grand Pavilion. At this moment, it was the peak time for the restaurants. The flow of customers came and went like an endless stream from the Grand Pavilion. Although the Pure Wind House had less customers, most that went out were refined scholars or ordinary mages.

Nian Bing stood there motionlessly. All along, his eyes never left the entrance of the Grand Pavilion. He had great patience and could continuously wait for that person. Within his body, the power of his Ice and Fire source was constantly circulating in order to restore the ice elements he had depleted earlier. His left hand

reached into his chest and grasped the Morning Dew knife. ‘People who didn’t offend me, I don’t offend them. If people offended me, then, I must punish them.’ Right at this moment, his heart was brimming with killing intent.

At last, after watching the nobles for more than half an hour, his target finally appeared. The man Third Manager Liao, dubbed as a mangy mutt by Xue Jing, came out from the Grand Pavilion’s entrance while holding the big iron fan he had earlier. Folding and unfolding, he fanned the night breeze and then, closed it by lightly hitting it on his abdomen. When the young women who were in charge of receiving the customers at the entrance saw him coming out, they suddenly straightened. None of them dared to take a breath. The Third Manager walked to a young woman, pinched her white and delicate face, and cursed, “You, fucklet! Are you a vampire?! Tell me, who’s going to come if they are welcomed by you! Give me a smile! Ah?! You didn’t hear me?”

The young woman shuddered and hurriedly said, “Ye-yes, Third Manager. I understand my mistake.”

Third Manager lewdly smiled. “Recognizing your mistake, that’s good. Tonight after you finished your work, come to my house. I will properly teach you. I must let know what you should do from now on.”

A frightened gleam was reflected from her eyes. “Please! Third Manager, I-I know my mistake. Forgive me!” Her knees went soft, almost kneeling on the ground.

Third Manager grabbed her by the collar. He angrily shouted,

“Your mother! You’re courting death. Attending me is your once in a lifetime great fortune. Since you’re unwilling, you can go to hell!” He raised the fan in his hand and was about to wave it down toward the young woman’s face when he suddenly felt his hand being stopped forcefully. “Your mother! Who dares to obstruct me?” He turned back while cursing. What appeared behind him was a middle-aged man who had grab onto his fan. The man wasn’t necessary pure. He appeared majestic, but his eyes were like those of a vulture. Seeing this man, Third Manager immediately soften down and hurriedly smiled apologetically. “Second Brother, I didn’t think it was you. This little girl didn’t want to give me any face. I just want to give her a lesson!”

The middle-aged man snorted and said, “I should give you a lesson instead. When will you change your loathsome character? A rabbit doesn’t eat the grass by its own burrow. You want to play with some women, just go to a brothel to find one. If you keep making trouble inside the Pavilion, I’ll just go inform Big Brother and let him stop you. Could it be that you don’t know that what the Boss dislikes the most is anything affecting the vitality of his staffs? Although the three of us are managers, if you provoked the Boss’ anger, we will be unable to defend you. Furthermore, Big Brother allowed me to admonish you. You better not provoke that girl Xue Jing from Pure Wind House anymore. They have the support of the Mage Association behind them, and even the Boss didn’t dare to make a move against them. Not to mention that since it’s you, you will one day provoke the anger of someone who will decide to hire an Advanced Mage to get rid of you; your death will be in vain.”

Hearing the middle-aged man reprimanded him, although his heart was resentful, he didn’t dare say much. “Second Brother, the matters that happen inside the Pavilion today wasn’t much of my

fault. I'm going out. In the future, I'll take note of what you said."

The middle-aged man lightly nodded and spoke, "Go! Behave properly and do not be too provocative. Big Brother said that I can substitute for you, so come back a bit earlier."

The Third Manager's fierce-looking face cramped up into a smile uglier than a cry. "Then, I'm going. A brothel, just to a brothel." Saying so, he used the fan in his hand to repeatedly beat his plump chest. Following the streets, he proceeded towards the south. As the Third Manager moved on, Nian Bing who was watching him closely also moved. He let out the hand that was holding the Morning Dew knife and acted like an ordinary passerby as he unhurriedly walked along the direction the Third Manager took.

Fifteen minutes after Nian Bing left to follow Third Manager Liao, a man that he met earlier, the First Manager, hurriedly left the Grand Pavilion. At that moment, the Second Manager who was welcoming the guests at the entrance saw him and hurriedly asked, "Big Brother, why are you in such a hurry? Don't tell me something happen inside the Pavilion?"

The fat on the face of the First Manager trembled as he shook his head. "Nothing grave happen inside the Pavilion. The Boss only told me, that an extremely honorable guest will be coming to our place tomorrow. He instructed me to suspend all business for tomorrow. Tonight, after all the guests had left, you and Old Three have to watch carefully that everyone cleaned everything perfectly from inside out. We must not allow even the smallest bit of carelessness."

The Second Manager blanked from the suddenness and said, “Big Brother, what kind of honorable guest is this? Last winter when the prince came here, the Boss didn’t even stop the business. Our family’s business is a big business. If we stop business for a day, we can lose a lot of income!” The First Manager spoke impatiently, “Enough already! Stop asking! You just need to know who’s coming tomorrow. Just as I said, I have work to do. A little bit of carelessness must not be allow! Where’s Old Three?”

The Second Manager was somewhat reluctant to talk. “Third Little Brother, Third Little Brother, he took care of some matters of the inner Pavilion. He said he had to go out, I just let him go.”

The First Manager snorted and said, “He’s surely went to a brothel again. Such terrible shortcomings he had, I don’t even know when he will be able to correct it. Immediately go grab him back for me. Tomorrow, if we don’t receive the honored guest properly, the results won’t be any good for us.”

The Second Manager agreed and rushed to chase after Third Manager.

Meanwhile, Third Manager Liao was humming a few notes of a song while planning which brothel house he will visit to find women today. Earlier today, he was given a lesson by Xue Jing and still had a bellyful of fire. ‘How can I be comfortable if I don’t let it flow out somewhere?’ He turned to a corner and went into a narrow and small alley. He was highly familiar with the terrain of this district. By going through this place, he will arrived at the best brothel.

“Stand right here! You already arrived to your end.” An ice-cold voice came out from behind him. Third Manager Liao felt the hair behind his neck stood up. He abruptly turned back and used his fan to block in front of him.

Under the moonlight, he saw a black clothed man with a very tall build, broad shoulders, and a wide back. On his face, there was a white skull mask. The sudden sight of it made him jump in fright. “Your mother! Which bastard are you?! Dressing up as God, playing the devil? I’m going to beat you to death.”

Chapter 12.2 – Magic Reaper

“You’re going to beat me to death? Ha, the first one to die will be you!” As the black clothed man raised his right hand, a fiery light radiated and a fireball appeared on the palm of his hand. The fireball grew several times bigger in a blink of an eye, reaching the size of a human head. The blazing light shined in the dark night, illuminating the skull mask of the black clothed man and causing it to appear even more mysterious and strange.

Third Manager Liao was so startled that he nearly retreated several steps, but he held his ground. He spoke in a fierce and unyielding manner, but concealed deep within him was the terror he truly felt. “You are a mage! Has the Pure Wind House hired you to deal with me?”

The black clothed man coldly said, “No. This is the will of the Heavens. You don’t need to know my identity. You can ask again in Hell!” Suddenly, the fiery light shined brighter as the fireball was released at a great speed, hammering through the air towards Third Manager Liao. Third Manager Liao did not waste more words on someone who was he could easily kill. His whole body emitted a yellow radiance as he waved his hand in front of him and used his fan to block the fireball. Although mages were revered, as long as a warrior wasn’t facing a high level mage, one would not be at a disadvantage in this kind of situation. Therefore, Third Manager Liao didn’t fear anything. He believed that he could use his dou qi to destroy this simple fireball without even thinking about it. After that, he would just defeat this mage.

The fireball whistled through the air until it was about to come in contact with the fan, and then, Bang! It suddenly changed

direction and rose into the air, drawing a beautiful arc. The fan, which contained all of the Third Manager's dou qi, suddenly missed, and the strong strike was delivered to the wall beside him. The strike contained all of his anger. His dou qi's might was great indeed. As dust and smoke dispersed, a huge hole could suddenly be seen where he had hit the wall. The interval between his dou qi pouring out and the wall exploding was the moment when his body's dou qi defense was at its weakest.

Right at that moment, a thin ray of serene blue light that lay camouflaged by the dark blue color of the night shot out and perforated Third Manager Liao's head right between his eyebrows, before fading away. He didn't even have the time to pull back his fan to defend. It was as if some kind of envoy from Hell sent to capture souls. His body stood still for moment, then, suddenly, it started to spasm violently. He was bombarded by the fireball from behind soon after. The flames consumed him layer upon layer until he became a charred corpse. His life had already been ended by the blue ray of light, therefore he hadn't even had the time to let out a blood-curling scream. His tall and robust body dropped loudly on the ground as the dark alley was illuminated by the flames. The black clothed man wearing a skull mask said in a somewhat hoarse voice, "For those who treat me kindly, I'll repay them tenfold. For those who have earned my enmity, I'll destroy them!" That man was Nian Bing. Since morning, he clearly remembered having been humiliated. With the exception of the Ice God Pagoda, which he had already vowed not to cross until he possessed formidable strength, there was no way he would accept getting insulted by anyone. Today was the first time he had killed a person. However, there was not even a trace of dread in his mind. For him, the death of Third Manager Liao was similar to that of an ant. It was hardly relevant.

For many years, his heart was filled with pent-up frustrations. By killing Liao, he was able to alleviate his frustrations. It couldn't be said that Nian Bing's heart was carefree, as deep inside, a part of his heart was brimming with darkness, so much that his body was emitting a trace of sinister aura.

Suddenly, he sensed a gloomy and cold aura coming from behind. The aura was sharp, and although it didn't reach his body, he could still perceive a faint pain in his back. Without hesitation, he took the Morning Dew knife out from his bosom in a flash. A blue-green brilliance spread out and sliced the light that shot toward his back. At that very moment, there was only one thing in his mind: everything is like firewood.

A ringing sound lightly echoed, following that, Nian Bing muffled a groan and coughed out a mouthful of blood which flowed down the edge of his mask while he retreated more than ten steps back. He forced himself to stand firmly. Right now, the Grand Pavilion's Second Manager was standing on the spot where he had been standing just a moment before. The manager was still holding the handle of a broken long sword and could clearly sense an ice-cold chilliness rushing from the edges of his broken blade. It made him break into cold sweat. Earlier, the Second Manager had arrived behind Nian Bing just when the fireball had reached Third Manager Liao's head. At that moment, it was already too late for him to save his brother. Since this was the case, he didn't make a sound, so as to not alarm Nian Bing. Right after the fireball had exploded, he silently started emitting dou qi, pulling out the flexible sword coiled around his waist, and thrusting it towards the vital points on Nian Bing's back. However, he didn't anticipate at all that his opponent, who was clearly a mage, would unexpectedly turn around at that moment and cleanly break his sword in half. Although that wisp of green-blue light was hidden, he could still

perfectly perceive that, without a doubt, his opponent had an exceptional precious blade.

He slowly let his raised hand down and started emitting a yellow-colored dou qi similar to Liao, but unlike Liao's dou qi, his was much thicker. Step by step, he ran towards Nian Bing. Then, he slowed into a walk as his eyes kept staring intently at the skull mask on Nian Bing's face. He coldly asked, "Who are you? Why did you ambush Third Little Brother? Talk! Did the Pure Wind House dispatch you?"

"Pure Wind House? Do you truly think they have the ability to prompt me to move?" Although they were at a standstill, Nian Bing stood firmly, staring at the Second Manager through the holes in his mask without a trace of confusion or disorder.

"It's not the Pure Wind House? Then, who are you? Why did you murder my Third Little Brother? If you don't answer, I will make it so that you feel as if you're dying, yet you cannot!" The Second Manager's voice became ice-cold.

Undisturbed, Nian Bing replied, "I am a killer. You can call me the Magic Reaper. I've already killed today, and I don't feel like killing any more. However, I'm sure we'll meet again some day." Without any warnings, red flames suddenly rose high into the air and exploded on an immense surface, pushing towards the Second Manager. The Second Manager didn't dare to be careless in the slightest, as he knew very well that between his dou qi cultivation and his Third Brother Liao's there wasn't a significant difference. Yet, his brother had been easily killed by the mysterious man who called himself the Magic Reaper. He hurriedly threw away his

broken sword, and gathered all the dou qi in his body before he violently exploded it out in order to confront the firewall that was suddenly right in front of him.

Without any sound, the flaming star scattered in all directions as his dou qi continued to reverberate in the small and narrow alley. He was surprised to discover that the firewall didn't have the slightest amount of power. However, when the flames faded away, the place where the Magic Reaper had stood, which was not too far away from him, was empty. Only Third Manager Liao's charred body was left, burning as it was before. Suddenly, a trace of fear appeared in his heart. The enigmatic Magic Reaper had given him an enormous mental pressure! He was a bit terrified. He feared that the person was still hiding in a nearby dark place, and would use his strange magic to attack.

Nian Bing staggered while running towards the main street. He suddenly came to a stop at a corner, gasping for breath several times. He cast a common healing spell on himself and felt a little better after that. If it wasn't for his Morning Dew knife breaking the sword in half in the nick of time, he feared that the sword dou qi congealed by the Second Manager would have already pierced through his heart. Even if he had been able to narrowly escape death, the aftershock of breaking the sword had caused some of the dou qi to be sent into his body and injure his internal organs. After all, he wasn't a warrior, but a mage, and mages were known to have the weakest physical resistance. The Firewall spell was a rank 5 magic spell. To be able to use that spell, Nian Bing would have needed to chant the incantation for a certain period of time. What he had used a moment ago to escape wasn't a genuine Firewall spell. Since he could compress a snowstorm, he had used the same principle with the support of his strong spirit force, and successfully inflated a common fireball to the size of a Firewall

spell. What Nian Bing didn't know was that his body's vessels were constantly being toughened up by the magic force coming from the source of his fire and ice magic. Compared to the body of a normal mage, his body was many times more resilient; that's why he could withstand the sword dou qi. If he had been an average mage, even if he hadn't died on the spot, he would have been unable to escape simply because of the strength of the impact.

Taking a breather for a moment, he felt the pain caused by the internal injuries of his organs' bleeding alleviate a little bit. The healing spell slowly started displaying its effect. The Magic Reaper was a name he had come up with on the spot, but it was a name that had deeply engraved itself into his mind. He inwardly vowed that one day, the Magic Reaper would surpass the Ice God Pagoda, and bestow death upon those who had once harmed his parents. While deep in thought, he quickly took off his black clothes and used his mask to wrap them into a bundle before walking back to Pure Wind House.

By the time Nian Bing had returned to Pure Wind House, it was already late into the night. He carefully pushed open the backdoor and quietly walked towards the firewood house. From the back door to the firewood house, he needed to pass by the back garden. Uncle Li had once warned him that the back garden was the Pure Wind House Owner's exclusive area, and without prior instructions, absolutely no servants were allowed to enter. The back garden's walls were two meters tall with plum blossom openworks on top of each and every wall. The blue-green walls seemed to fuse together with the surroundings. Nian Bing's height was just right for him to be able to look inside the back garden through the plum blossom openworks. He followed a trail and walked straight ahead. From the corner of his eye, he unintentionally discovered, through the openwork, that

something red flashed by. It made him curious, so he subconsciously moved closer to the back garden.

Chapter 12.3 – Magic Reaper

It was a graceful figure practicing various elegant forms. The handle of the longsword was glittering with a red radiance, twisting and flipping up and down, creating traces of red light. The solidified dou qi that the figure was emitting undulated strongly, as the surrounding flowers, plants and trees rustled under its brush. At that moment, the one performing the sword-dance was Xue Jing. It seemed that she was very fond of the color red. Even though she had change her clothes for a long cheongsam, it was still flame-colored. It made her figure appear more vigorous. Her movements were as moving clouds and flowing water, and were generally not lacking agility. Nian Bing was somewhat puzzled. ‘It’s this late at night, but she hasn’t returned to her room to sleep. Why is she still here performing a sword-dance? Nevermind her. Besides, I still have to go back and use several healing spells on myself to take care of my injuries.’

As he had decided, he started to quietly walk away. But just as he was about to leave, his foot stepped on a bunch of flowers and plants which produced an extremely muffled sound.

“Who’s there?” Nian Bing secretly cursed. He hurriedly threw the black gown and mask in the midst of the flowers and plants as fast as he could. He had barely done it when a red cloud leaped from the wall of the courtyard to the garden and swiftly appeared in front of him. The red light was coming from Xue Jing’s long sword, which was already resting on Nian Bing’s neck. With that stream of dou qi circulating in the air, he didn’t dare rush into action.

Xue Jing evidently remembered Nian Bing to some extent

because of his handsome features. Her brows slightly creased as she said, “It’s you. Didn’t they send you to the firewood house to help out? What are you doing running around so late at night instead of properly resting?”

Nian Bing pretended to be fearful and alarmed and replied, “Good evening Miss. Today, I’ve just arrived in the city. I thought to go buy some daily life items, but I hadn’t expected things in Ice-Snow city to be so expensive and so I wasn’t able to buy anything. Since I’ve just arrived here, I’m not familiar with the streets here and took the wrong direction. That’s why I came back this late. May I asked Miss, why are you still awake so late at night, instead of sleeping?”

Xue Jing snorted. She was obviously not in a very good mood. She put back the red long sword in her scabbard. “If it’s like that, then it’s good. If I ever find out that you came to the Pure Wind House with ill intents, you better worry for your neck.”

“I don’t dare! I don’t dare! The fact that I can have a proper meal to eat is all thanks to Miss’s generosity. I must hold on to this opportunity tightly. Miss, if there’s nothing else, I’m going back first.” He was gloomy although he had successfully passed through the ordeal. He could only take back his black gown and mask at a later time. After he humbly greeted Xue Jing, he hurriedly walked towards the firewood house.

“Just wait a moment.” Suddenly, Xue Jing called Nian Bing. Nian Bing became rigid as his thoughts darkened. ‘Don’t tell me she saw me throw those things in the flowers bed? That’s not possible. The sky was so dark and she’s not a night owl.’

He turned around and asked, “Miss, is there another matter you wish to instruct me on?”

Xue Jing was sizing Nian Bing up and down with her eyes. Suddenly, she moved. Without any warnings, Nian Bing had to face the current situation in front of him. He reached to grab the handle of his knife hidden in his jacket near his chest and pulled it out. By the time Nian Bing had sensed the soaring clouds and harnessed fog, he had already been captured although his Snowstorm was ready to be activate. This was the first time it had ever happened to him. He lowered his right hand touching the Morning Dew knife on his chest. At the same time, his left hand was ready to cast magic. However, for him, it was disadvantageous to fight with Xue Jing, even if he would be using his fastest reaction speed.

Xue Jing was now on top of the garden’s wall. She beckoned Ning Bing with a slight movement of her head. Nian Bing floated to the interior of the garden, lead by the red dou qi which had wrapped around him. Several times, it went up and down until it finally stopped on the eaves of an octagonal pavilion inside the garden. Releasing Nian Bing next to her, she softly said, “Sit down and don’t go anywhere.” In fact, she didn’t need to instruct Nian Bing since he really didn’t dare to move around. This pavilion was four or five meters high, if he fell from there, there was no doubt the fall wouldn’t be a pleasant one. He didn’t understand why Xue Jing would bring him up here. However, right now, he was unable to go anywhere and could only very carefully use one healing spell at a time. In case something unforeseen happened, he would at least be able to deal with it.

Xue Jing sat down and put her elbows on her knees. Blurs of light constantly flashed through her eyes as she gazed at the round full moon in the sky. Nian Bing realized, 'She seems to have some troubles on her mind.'

Each of them believed that the other had their own worries. Whilst one of them was secretly healing himself, neither said anything, and so, an hour soon passed by. Nian Bing already felt that his internal organs didn't ache as bad as before, which allowed him to relax a bit. He stealthily grabbed the Flame God's stone, as fire magic was the best choice for attacking. At this moment, he couldn't help but recall again the sight when he had killed Manager Liao. He knew that with his own strength, even if he'd actually had a head-on clash, he wouldn't have been any weaker than Third Manager Liao. However, at that time, it proved to be more complicated than he originally thought, since, unexpectedly, Manager Liao wasn't as weak as he expected. On the contrary, he must have possessed the strength of a first class Swordmaster, judging by his dou qi. The reason why he had easily managed to kill him was due to his ingenious way of making use of his two different types of magic. By using a third rank exploding fireball as distraction and, by combining his iceblade spell with his cooking technique, Needle Pierces Rice, he was able to create a single point attack named Ice Star Needle. The effectiveness of his self-created technique could be witnessed from the quick death of Manager Liao in the small alley. Although the iceblade spell was a rank two ice magic, when it was compressed to the size of a needle, its might was absolutely not to be trifled with. As long as the opponent's dou qi was not too powerful, it could completely pierce through anyone's defense without any effort.

"Why aren't you saying anything?" Just as Nian Bing was pondering on the mysteries of magic, he heard Xue Jing's voice.

Startled, he unconsciously dodged to the side out of reflex, but now there was nothing under his feet. He cried out in alarm as he suddenly slipped from the eaves. As he lost his balance, as fast as he could, he used both his hands to grab at anything that could stop his fall and took a firm hold of Xue Jing's skirt. Xue Jing was also scared by Nian Bing, as he had suddenly slipped down. As her heart started palpitating with fright, she also felt her body become heavier, and soon after she was dragged down right after him. As they both fell off the pavilion's roof, they flipped and turned in the air. Xue Jing had practiced martial arts since childhood. Her reaction was extremely fast. She flipped her body in mid-air, grabbing Nian Bing's waist and held him in her arms, while her other hand made a downward motion. She utilized her dou qi to strike the ground and made use of the recoil to once again jump back on top of the pavilion.

Silence, absolute silence. Nian Bing and Xue Jing were staring at each other while maintaining their strange position which was her holding Nian Bing by his waist and him holding her by the neck while his other hand was still holding her skirt, which was partially revealing her snow white thigh. His hand hooked on Xue Jing was touching her soft and silky nape. His heartbeat pounded erratically while his mind had momentarily blanked. He was always quick-witted, with hundred of tricks up his sleeve, but at this moment, he had turned dumb from not knowing what to do.

“Bastard!” Xue Jing suddenly let go of his waist and moved to slap Nian Bing's face. The slap made him fall off the pavilion once again. Xue Jing used her foot to hook him back on the pavilion and she swatted his hand that was still grabbing her skirt, as she furiously looked at him. Nian Bing was being beaten silly by Xue Jing. He used his hand to rub where she had slapped his face. He didn't know what he was supposed to do, as Xue Jing looked as if

her emotions were slowly rising in turmoil. Gradually, her gaze turned hazy, tears pooling more and more, until they suddenly overflowed like a broken dam. She started sobbing loudly, as if she had been wronged by Nian Bing. Her tears kept flowing out without stopping.

“Miss, I-I didn’t mean to do that. It wasn’t on purpose!” Nian Bing tried to explain. At this moment, in front of a beautiful crying woman, he didn’t know what to do.

Xue Jing suddenly lifted her head and cast an angry look at Nian Bing. “I told you to not move! Who told you to move around?”

Nian Bing bitterly smiled, “Ah! I was startled by you. Do you think I wanted to move?” At that moment, the previous alluring scene kept replaying before his eyes, already making him forget about his own identity.

Xue Jing used her big eyes to glare at Nian Bing. “Still, you are very strange. Who told you not to speak for an hour?”

Nian Bing said in surprise, “Wasn’t it you who left me to sit here? You were also the one who brought me up here.”

Xue Jing was aware of her bent logic. She used her sleeve to wipe her tears and groaned. “In my family, everyone is a hero rescuing a beauty, but today, for the first time, a beautiful woman like me is saving a good-for-nothing. It’s really all in vain that you grew up this big.”

Nian Bing inwardly bitterly laugh. ‘A good-for-nothing, just a good-for-nothing...ah!’ He absolutely couldn’t tell Xue Jing that he was actually a Great Mage. Right now, he still hadn’t investigated the kitchen skills of Pure Wind House. It was something that required time. As he touched his face, he discovered that his left side had already started to swell, and even had a clear hand imprint. Even by using a low level healing spell every day, it would take him at least three days before he could go meet people. Today, it was the first time he had killed someone and had almost been killed in the process. With great difficulty, he had been able to return, and for some mysterious reason, he had to suffer a slap. He was truly unlucky. It was like drinking cold water and then, out of nowhere, getting something stuck between your teeth.

Xue Jing once again sat down on the edge, with her elbows on her knees. Her expression gradually turned back to a peaceful one as she looked at the moon in the sky. “Where do you come from?”

“Me?” Nian Bing replied, “I’m someone from the Harmonic Flower Empire.” It was the first time he had spoken about his origins. Even during the time he had been studying cooking skills, Zha Ji had never asked him about his origins.

“Harmonic Flower Empire? Ah! The Harmonic Flower known as the Fire Empire. That place, in terms of distance, is the farthest away from the Ice Moon Empire. Are you on the run? If not, then why did come to this faraway place?”

Nian Bing softly sighed and said, “What person leaves their home willingly? If only it hadn’t been fate that made it so. I was only ten that year when I came with my father to the Ice Moon Empire.

However, now, only I remained here alone.”

Xue Jing turned her head to look at Nian Bing. “You also look as if you’re grieving for someone?”

Chapter 13.1 – The Making Of The Golden Aromatic Ring

Nian Bing's heart trembled. Suddenly, he snapped out of his flashbacks and secretly cursed himself. How had his guard relaxed this much? It seemed that the charm of a beautiful woman was truly not small! "Miss, what do you mean by also?"

Xue Jing glared at Nian Bing and said, "Weren't you shouting 'you, you' just a while ago? Why has it suddenly turned into 'Miss' now?"

Nian Bing helplessly said, "I forgot my manners a moment ago. I should have addressed you with 'Miss'."

Xue Jing waved her hand in impatience before saying, "Forget it! Today, I'm very frustrated and only want to find someone to chat for a day. So, you don't need to call me Miss. Call me Xue Jing. At first, I wanted to have a good talk with Ling'er, but she doesn't seem to understand this kind of thing, and on top of it all, she even managed to make me muddle-headed. Oh! That's right, what's your name again?"

"I'm called Nian Bing."

"Now, you tell me, what kind of woman do men like the most?" It took all the courage for Xue Jing to ask this question, and immediately after, her face started to flush red.

Nian Bing inwardly thought, ‘The Pure Wind House’s Miss’s fear is about love.’ “Miss, er, no... Xue Jing, I’m also not very clear about this matter, but with your beautiful appearance, I’m certain it is what most men like.”

Hearing those words, her beautiful eyes once again were filled with tears. “You’re saying nonsense! If that was the true, then why doesn’t he like me? I always appear strong and ruthless, but even when other people gossip about me, he doesn’t join them and doesn’t pay attention to them.”

From the point of view of an outsider, how could Nian Bing know about the true circumstances of a relationship between others? He forced a smile and said, “Miss, I’m afraid you need to ask him about this matter. Perhaps, he didn’t open his mouth to say anything because, in his heart, he might like you?”

Xue Jing wiped her tears and said in a somewhat surprise tone, “Is what you said true?”

Nian Bing hesitated. “It must be. Since you like him, you should approach him often and then, where there’s a will, there is a way.”

Xue Jing punched Nian Bing with her fist and said, “I am girl. How can a girl take the initiative in this kind of matter? Nian Bing, earlier, you said that I was the kind of beautiful girl that most men like. Then, do you like me too?”

“Cough! Cough!” Nian Bing almost choked to death with his saliva. “Miss, stop joking with me! Our statuses is different!”

Xue Jing persisted saying, “It doesn’t matter since we’re not taking status into account right now. Let’s suppose we are friends. Do you like me or not?”

Inside Nian Bing’s heart, he preferred girls who were similar to Long Ling’er or, maybe, Feng Nu, who were gentle and soft. As for the beautiful girls that were bold and vigorous like Xue Jing, he wasn’t really interested in them. However, at this moment, when he looked at Xue Jing’s teary eyes, he really couldn’t say any words of rejection. He could only nod lightly and answer awkwardly. “Yeah, I like.”

“Humph! You seem very reluctant. However, you better remember the words you said today. Later, if I want to make you do anything, you are not allowed to refuse. Do you hear me?”

Nian Bing bitterly smiled at the promise that was forced on him. At this moment, even if he didn’t want to agree, he also didn’t know how he could refuse. Xue Jing turned back and once again faced the moon, mumbling, “Oh! He’s indeed very stylish. Although his appearance is not as beautiful as mine, he’s a Great Swordmaster approaching the Martial Master’s rank. The way he looks when he holds the sword is especially handsome. That feeling of might, it just makes you want to fawn on him. What I like the most is people with that kind of heroic spirit, like him. This won’t do! I must look for an opportunity to find out about his feelings. If not, whatever is said, I won’t be able to resign myself to give up on this love.”

All night, until the coming of dawn, Nian Bing accompanied Xue

Jing as they sat on the top of the pavilion. Then, Xue Jing lead him to the exit of the garden and let him leave. The whole night, he hadn't even had a wink of sleep. This was the first time in many years for Nian Bing to not meditate at all during the night. When he returned to his room, he didn't go to sleep yet. Instead, he used healing spells on his injuries. He hoped they could make the imprint of the palm on his face go away. He had to be presentable for when he would go to look at the magic spells at the Mage Association. Unfortunately, contrary to what he had hoped, the basic effects of the healing spells were really limited. The palm imprint was a little bit lighter now, but it was still quite evident. Grudgingly, Nian Bing had no other alternative but to take advantage of the first light of dawn to stealthily leave, in order to find a 24-hour-open pharmacy, buy some white gauzes and tape them in a stack on the left side of his face. Although doing so didn't make it look better, compared to showing the red palm imprint, this was many times better.

While yawning, Uncle Li went out of his room. He took a breath of fresh air as he stretched his body. Then, he turned his head and glanced at the door of the other room. He thought aloud, "Nian Bing, this youngster, I don't even know if he came back last night. Ah! Young people these days... They just want to have fun."

"I'm sorry Uncle Li. Yesterday night, I did return quite late. " Nian Bing pushed the door to go out. He had returned from outdoors not long ago. After sneaking back in, he had barely been able to pick up the black gown and the mask before going back, not even having the least bit of time to sit down.

Uncle Li looked at the gauzes on his face. He couldn't help but ask in surprise, "What happened to you? How did you get injured?"

Nian Bing smiled wryly and said, “Yesterday, when I was walking down the road, I wasn’t careful and didn’t know which way I was going. As a result, I fell down on my face. I have no choice but to put some medicine on it now. The doctor said it would take three or four days before it heals completely.”

Uncle Li laughed. “Ah! You! You really are clumsy. You are such a handsome young man. It wouldn’t be good if it left a scar on your face. You should be more careful next time. Let’s go! We should go eat breakfast.”

Nian Bing was really hungry since he hadn’t had anything to eat since last noon, when he had eaten with Feng Nu. With Uncle Li guiding, they both walked towards the distant kitchen. As the kitchen’s doorway came into view, there were two rows of long wooden tables, with roughly thirty or forty people dressed in white-colored cooking uniforms sitting at them, eating and drinking. Nian Bing said, “Ah! The kitchen people really rise early.”

Uncle Li replied, “Of course they need to rise early. Morning is the busiest time for them. They have to prepare all the required ingredients needed for the rest of the day. All the ingredients used at Pure Wind House are very carefully selected, of the highest quality. All the carefully selected ingredients have three or four people in charge of them. Let’s go see what’s on today’s menu.”

Breakfast was steamed buns and congee. Most of the chefs recognized Uncle Li as he went around the table to introduce Nian Bing, greeting them one by one. Nian Bing discovered that beside

those tables, there was one with a single person sitting there, eating by himself. The other chefs were all conscious of that table.

“Nian Bing, that person is our Pure Wind House’s head chef. That man is the renowned Clever King of the Kitchen. He is called Ming Yuan or Master Ming. Let’s quickly go to meet him. Head Chef, this is Nian Bing. He’s the new employee who is helping me. His hands and feet can be considered quick and diligent. In the future, we will trouble you a lot to look after him,” Uncle Li earnestly introduced Nian Bing on his behalf.

Ming Yuan’s build was average, neither fat nor thin. When he heard uncle Li introducing Nian Bing, he lifted his head to look at Nian Bing. He seemed to be past his forties. Although his appearance was ordinary, his eyes made Nian Bing feel a sense of familiarity. His eyes had the same expression as Zha Ji, but the similarity stopped there. There were too many differences when compared to Zha Ji. His teacher had once told Nian Bing that a competent chef’s expression would be different from that of an average chef’s. That difference was caused by the single-minded devotion a chef had towards his kitchen skills, every single day of each year. Zha Ji also told Nian Bing that even though he had completed his studies on kitchen skills, there was still a disparity with his heat control and his perception. As for his perception, he just needed to develop it as a support.

Ming Yuan’s expression seemed very cold and detached. He slightly nodded his head to Nian Bing and continued to eat his breakfast.

Uncle Li led Nian Bing to take place at the long table next to Ming

Yuan's table. They also ate their breakfast. The steamed buns were stuffed with ground meat, but the flavor was lacking by far. However, since he had been hungry for a while, he didn't really care about anything else, except to stuff himself until he was full.

Just when Nian Bing had eaten his fill and was preparing to go back to work with Uncle Li, he saw someone he didn't ever wish to see again. A strolling fiery red silhouette had arrived.

"Uncle Ming, the things that you're eating this morning look good. Did you leave some for me?" Xue Jing's apparition caused all of the kitchen staff members to hurriedly stop what they were doing. One by one, they stood up and greeted her. Only Ming Yuan stayed seated as he was before. He gave a soft pampered look to Xue Jing and said, "You, this girl... Hasn't our light breakfast already been delivered to you? How come you are still running off to this place trying to take my things?" At this moment, his ice-cold facial features changed into a faint smile.

Xue Jing hadn't slept for a whole night. However, at this instant, her mind didn't seem to be tired in the slightest. "That's not important, I really can't look out for you? As your niece, I'm thinking about you, but you clearly don't believe me!"

Ming Yuan laughed out loud and said, "You thought about me? I see. You only think about me when you want me to make you some snacks! Let's see, today you want to eat WoWo, sweet fruit roll-up or do you still want to eat the Golden Aromatic Ring? This morning your uncle doesn't have any matters to attend to, so I have time to make you some."

Chapter 13.2 – The Making Of The Golden Aromatic Ring

Hearing corn bread , sweet fruit roll and Golden Aromatic Ring, these three pastries' names, Nian Bing couldn't help but have his heart stirred. Among these three types of pastries, he had heard about two of them. The sweet fruit roll and the Golden Aromatic Ring were both famous snacks, but only those who had a good grasp of heat control could properly make them, so very few people were able to bake them. However, what was that corn bread? Since Ming Yuan was famed as the Clever King of the kitchen, compared to other chefs, he was probably an expert and used ingenious cooking methods. If there was an opportunity, he would certainly ask Ming Yuan for guidance regarding this corn bread's recipe.

Xue Jing seriously thought about it and said, “Uncle Ming, I want to eat the Golden Aromatic Ring. You also know that I love to eat this the most. If not, then how about you teach me how you make it?”

Ming Yuan deliberately cried out in alarm and said, “You, cooking? Forget about it! If your dad allows you to burn down Pure Wind House's kitchen, then I don't mind teaching you. However, Uncle still wants to live for a few more years. Don't you want me to cook you good food many more times in the future? I say, you girl, although the Golden Aromatic Ring is crispy and fragrant... It's still really oily. For your skin, it's not very good.”

Xue Jing happily laughed and said, “I don't eat it every day, anyway. It doesn't matter since it's been quite a while since I last

ate it.”

Ming Yuan stood up and said, “That’s good! Come, follow me. Uncle will now make it just for you. The ingredients are already prepared.”

Xue Jing humbly smiled, then whispered a few sentences near his ear. When Ming Yuan heard what she had to say, his brows wrinkled slightly as his sight set on Nian Bing, who wasn’t too far away. After pondering on it for a moment, he said, “You... This girl, you’re just giving me trouble. Fine, I agree, but I’m only going to make it once. What he is able to learn from this is his own problem.”

Xue Jing happily said, “I know Uncle is the best!”

Ming Yuan unhappily said, “It would be better for you not to let people like that handsome young man confuse you. Ah, this girl! There’s truly nothing that can be done.” As he finished speaking, he went ahead and walked towards the kitchen.

Nian Bing noticed that before leaving, Ming Yuan had given him a glance that looked very much like warning. ‘Don’t tell me it has something to do with what Xue Jing whispered a moment ago to Ming Yuan?’ As he was thinking about it, he heard Xue Jing call him. “Nian Bing, come over here and give Uncle Li a helping hand.” When her words came out, immediately, all the chefs’ eyes settled on Nian Bing, their faces showing all kinds of different expressions. One could easily guess that many of them had twisted thoughts. With Xue Jing shouting tactlessly, it was clear that the head chef would let Nian Bing learn the method of making the

Golden Aromatic Ring, and all of them wanted to know why. Since the Clever King of the kitchen was renowned as someone who kept his recipes to himself, he never let other people watch him while he was cooking.

Nian Bing stood and pointed at his nose. “Miss, you’re calling me? My task is only to chop firewood.”

Xue Jing glared at him and angrily said, “If I tell you to come, you just need to obey. Quit spouting nonsense! Hurry up, come over!”

Nian Bing grudgingly walked past the kitchen staff until he arrived besides Xue Jing. He asked in a soft voice, “What are you planning?”

Xue Jing smiled slightly and said, “Well, consider this an apology for the slap on your face. Let me tell you this. I can’t even tell you how many people want to learn Uncle Ming’s consummate art. This opportunity is extremely rare! You could even be allowed to transfer from the firewood house to the kitchen!”

Nian Bing looked at Xue Jing with a strange gaze. This young lady with a forceful temperament appeared to have a cute side as well.

Xue Jing’s charming face faintly blushed and she dodged Nian Bing’s gaze. “Ah! Go now! You can stop overthinking. Yesterday night you kept me company for a long time and kept being beaten by me. I’m only compensating you for it, that’s all! Besides, later on, I might ask you for a favor.”

Whilst talking, they had already entered the kitchen. Pure Wind House was worthy to be called a renowned restaurant. Their kitchen was excessively huge and measured more than a thousand square meters. Although the surface was very big and was made of all kinds of materials, it wasn't messy in the least. The layout was clearly well thought out, as all kinds of kitchen equipment were neatly laid out throughout the room. Xue Jing pulled Nian Bing after her and both walked deeper into the kitchen. While walking, she said, "Usually, Uncle Ming doesn't need to personally go into the kitchen. Only important customers can have a taste of the dishes he makes himself. Of course, I'm an exception."

Ming Yuan's cooking space was separated by a cloth curtain. It was obvious he didn't want other people to watch him while he was cooking. In Nian Bing's heart, he secretly disapproved. 'These famous chefs, each and every one of them is stingy. How can cooking skills be developed and promoted if it's like this?'

Xue Jing and Nian Bing lifted the curtain, entering Ming Yuan's cooking space, which measured approximately 20 square meters. Ming Yuan looked at them and coldly told Nian Bing, "I'm only going to make it once. Come quickly! You have to watch carefully. How much you can learn from watching only depends on your good luck." As he stopped talking, his hands immediately moved into action.

They could only see Ming Yuan's left hand grabbing a clean, empty pot. Then, with his right hand, he scooped up around four cups of flour, pouring them one by one into the pot. At the same time, he used the ladle in his left hand to scoop up water and poured the half of the water into the pot and mixed it with the

flour, before slowly pouring the rest in the mix. His hands were each doing different things at the same time, but there wasn't the slightest hesitation or disorder in his movements. Nian Bing knew that this cooking skill was in the scope of the famous Two Hands Mutual Gain technique. The mind's attention would divide in two, and would focus on two different actions. At that moment, Ming Yuan's right hand took out a little bit of white powder from one of the three bottles in a box filled with white-colored spices, and then mixed it with the flour. He flatly said, "Dissolve the salt in warm water, along with baking soda and a little bit of alum. This is the foundation of the recipe." As his voice faded away, his hands had already completed the actions he had just described. With a swift movement of his hands, the spice bottles had already returned into the little box. Then, he thrust his hands into the pot of flour and started kneading at high speed. The flour and seasonings mixed together, becoming a dough in the span of several blinks of an eye.

In Nian Bing's heart, it was very clear. Mixing ingredients together was only secondary. What was most important was the proportion of the ingredients in the mix, as well as the kneading technique. The kneading technique had to be very carefully done. It was necessary to apply force from the wrist, and at the same time paying attention to the way the fingers' kneading, which had a particular sequence to it. If any of the steps weren't done correctly, the finished product would be somewhat different. Although this was just the beginning of the recipe, Nian Bing had already been able to understand a lot of things regarding this Golden Aromatic Ring. In Nian Bing's heart, he agreed, 'As expected of an expert. Coming to the Pure Wind House wasn't in vain.'

Ming Yuan's hands moved with more and more speed. In his hand, the dough took various forms as it suddenly became a long

roll, before he flattened it. In the entire procedure, there hadn't been a single moment of pause. If it had been an average chef, the time it would have taken to mix and knead the ingredients into dough would probably have been more than an hour. Ming Yuan, on the other hand, had continuously kneaded the dough, allowing it to ferment as much as possible, saving time on top of it all. To be able to accomplish such a thing, the chef needed to be highly skilled and very familiar with the incorporated seasoning mixtures. With only this much, Ming Yuan had already proven that his title of Clever King of the kitchen wasn't his for nothing.

Finally, after a 15 minutes of kneading, the dough on top of the kneading board was shaped into an oval. Ming Yuan seemed very calm, as if the vigorous kneading movements 10 minutes ago hadn't been enough to make him work up a sweat. He took a glance at Nian Bing and said, "Look carefully, the next part is the crucial point." While he was talking, he used a flint stone to ignite the stove, and put a clean iron pot on the stove fire. Then, he filled half the pot with oil.

He took out a rolling pin that was one meter and five centimeters in length and made a few simple movements. The dough on the kneading board instantly became flat. Afterwards, he made some exceptionally quick movements. It was very obvious that Ming Yuan didn't wish for Nian Bing to learn anything from observing him. He took out a small custom made kitchen knife. As the knife glinted, the flat dough had already been cut into even long strips of 2.5 centimeters. Next, each of his hands pressed on one extremity of the strips, stretching it another 2.5 centimeters. After that, he used his knife to make incisions of 1.25 centimeters in the strips, and then folded the two sides. Nian Bing saw very clearly that the two sides hadn't been cut through, they only had small cuts. At this moment, the oil's temperature had reached medium heat.

Ming Yuan waved his right hand and the well made half-finished Golden Aromatic Ring was smoothly placed into the pot. A pair of chopsticks that seemed to have appeared out of nowhere was held in his left hand. The chopsticks held the strips by the middle. Immediately, with amazing and brilliant technique, he made the strips become a circle that looked similar to the shape of a bracelet. The chopsticks kept turning and flipping the strips, making more rings. In the meantime, his other hand didn't stay idle, as it started sending the rings into the pot of oil. Xue Jing hurriedly took a plate. One after the other, the gold colored Golden Aromatic Rings were taken out. Immediately, the fragrance filled the whole place, making people want to eat them right away. After the tenth identical Golden Aromatic Ring came out, Ming Yuan stopped cooking. While he covered the stove and extinguished the fire, he said to Xue Jing, "Jing Jing, try it. You see, your uncle Ming's handicraft is not as good as it was before."

Xue Jing happily laughed and said, "Uncle Ming's handicraft is the most wonderful! How can you say it was less than before? Eh! Nian Bing, you..."

Chapter 13.3 – The Making Of The Golden Aromatic Ring

From the time the first Golden Aromatic Ring came out from the pot, Nian Bing had already forgotten about everything else. He was completely immersed in the essence of Ming Yuan's culinary arts. At this instant, with his chopsticks he took a Golden Aromatic Ring and took a bite. He nodded his head in praise and was soliloquizing, "Ah! Fragrant, crunchy, crispy and crumbling a bit from the bite. As expected from an expert with skills!"

Ming Yuan glared at Nian Bing, as he exceeded his place and meddled in other people's affairs. He strongly wanted to flare-up, but he heard Nian Bing continue to speak. "Delicate hands which keep kneading until it becomes a jade countless people long for, jade oil pan fried to produce a delicate dark yellow color. Night comes to the sleeping spring without severity, narrowly pushing down on a beautiful woman's coiled golden arm. Delicious, as expected of a first-rate Golden Aromatic Ring."

Xue Jing resentfully said, "Nian Bing, what are you doing? Who let you eat my breakfast?"

Nian Bing cried out in alarm. He was now completely clear-headed. He hurriedly stuffed the rest of the Golden Aromatic Ring in his mouth and put back the chopstick on the side of the place. He mumbled, "I'm sorry Miss. Head Chef's skills were so exquisite that I..." While he was talking, he took a moment to swallow the rest of the Golden Aromatic Ring. His expression was extremely awkward.

Ming Yuan looked at Nian Bing with astonishment and asked in a heavy voice, “Who are you? How can you so quickly memorize the method of production of the Golden Aromatic Ring?”

Nian Bing blanked for a moment and then, said with a smile, “I once heard about it from someone at a vendor’s stall on the street. I felt that what was said was very suitable for the Golden Aromatic Ring. I’ll write it down for you to take a look at.”

Ming Yuan snorted. “Blindly saying words without looking at who’s the target of the words, in the case someone knows the production formula of the Golden Aromatic Ring, I also will not need to be confused.”

Xue Jing looked at Nian Bing in surprise. She just wanted to say something, but she heard the sound of hurried footsteps coming from outside. “Miss and Head Chef, things are not good. Something has happened.”

Xue Jing lifted the curtain and came out. She only saw a servant from Pure Wind House hastily running towards her with his forehead beaded with sweat. She couldn’t help, but frown and said, “Why are you getting all panicked for? Slowly tell me what the matter is about.”

The servant gasped for breath before he said, “Miss, I just heard news that, for some unknown reasons, the City’s Lord suddenly sealed up all four gates of Ice-Snow City. He doesn’t allow anyone to go out. What’s more, the Grand Pavilion is suddenly closed for today. I just heard that their Third Manager suddenly died last night.” “Died? That mangy mutt dog Third Manager Liao died?

How could this happen?”

At this moment, Nian Bing and Ming Yuan had already came out. Ming Yuan calmly said, “Calm down! First, you need to leave quickly. Let’s go find your dad and see if he knows something about this situation.”

Xue Jing nodded her head impatiently. She and Ming Yuan made haste to leave the kitchen. Before he left, Ming Yuan turned around and looked at Nian Bing. “I’ll come back to look for you. Return to the firewood house first.”

Nian Bing finally relaxed and thought to himself, ‘Originally, I planned to stay here for a long period of time, but it looks like my culinary skills can’t be concealed any longer. It’s unfortunate that I still don’t know the special skill of the Grand Pavilion chef. Forget it. If I can’t conceal my skills any longer, I just need to go somewhere and wait until Feng Nu completes the True Sun knife. Afterwards, I’ll just secretly leave the Ice and Snow City. Today, Ice and Snow City sealed its entrances and the Grand Pavilion temporarily closed. What is the reason for this? I doubt that Manager Liao’s death could lock down the whole city.’

At the Grand Pavilion

Today, the dazzling grand hall's atmosphere was filled with seriousness. The whole grand hall was clean until it was spotless. There were ten tables that surrounded a table in the center that seated only one person. The rest were waiting respectfully behind that person.

It was a woman with long white hair that sat there as if she was a sculpted ice jade statue. The white chang pao embroidered with gold, highlighted her distinctive cold and noble air. Her absolutely beautiful complexion made people unable to have any impure thoughts. Her body was surrounded by a layer of something similar to a mist of frost. Her eyes were closed. Her whole being was ice-cold and discouraged people from approaching near her.

There were ten other people standing behind her. Apart from a mage wearing a cyan mage's gown, the rest of them seemed to be trembling with fear. On the chest of the mage's blue gown, there was a golden emblem with a six-pointed star on it. In the middle of the star, a gradually rising vortex was embroidered and appeared to be extremely sumptuous.

“Why is the president of the Warrior Association not here yet?” Sitting upright, the white clothed woman opened her mouth to ask. It felt like the grand hall became slightly colder.

A middle aged man wearing magnificent clothes hurriedly stepped forward and deferentially said, “Reporting to the Lord Goddess' Worshipper, the Warrior Association's president is out

for business matters. Also, he seldom stayed in Ice and Snow City. Therefore, he could not be present.” This person sitting upright in the Grand Pavilion’s grand hall was precisely the one who went out in order to search for the Ice Snow Goddess’s stone. On the continent, she was the only Descended God known as the Ice Snow Goddess’ worshipper. She was also the only representative of the Ice Moon Empire as her magic realm was the strongest. It could be say that she was the reason of the lockdown of the second biggest city in the Ice Moon Empire.

The Ice Snow Goddess’s worshipper indifferently said, “You are all respectable leaders of Ice Snow city. I’m giving you three days to search every nook and cranny of the city to find the Ice Snow Goddess’s stone. If that person’s abilities are very powerful, you only need to force him to use the magic inside the God stone. I will personally take care of it.”

With the previously words, the middle-aged man somehow managed to say something, “Goddess’s Great Worshipper, you also know that Ice and Snow City is very big. Three days time, isn’t it very short?”

The Ice-Snow Goddess’s Worshipper’s eyes slowly opened. A pure cold blue electric ray shot out, illuminating the middle-aged man. Immediately, his whole body quivered and he retreated back several steps before he stood firmly. “Marquis Noah, if you feel that the position of Ice and Snow city’s lord is not fit for you, I can easily arrange something for you anytime.”

When Marquis Noah heard these words, immediately, his complexion changed greatly. He hurriedly said, “No. Goddess’s

Great Worshipper, I didn't mean what I say. Whatever your commands are, we will not dare to disobey. However, without any clues, I also cannot guarantee you that we will find it, but we can certainly try to search for it."

The Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper coldly snorted and said, "Last night, when I was on the road, I clearly felt the energy that Ice Snow Goddess's stone emitted. It is certainly inside the Ice and Snow City. If this matter does not produce any result, you are the first one to be questioned by me."

At that instant, Marquis Noah had a bitter look. In such a big city, to try to find a tiny stone, this was akin to fish a needle from the sea. What's more, it had to be done in three days. Sealing the city for three days would inevitably have enormous repercussions on the Ice and Snow city's business operation and problems would show up. However, at this moment, he didn't have any others methods and trying to reason with the Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper wasn't of any use. He helplessly nodded his head and said, "I will certainly try my utmost."

"Great Goddess's Worshipper, I have a matter I don't know if inappropriate to speak of." The words were from a low and petty voice coming out from behind. The owner of the voice was Grand Pavilion's Second Manager. He and the First Manager stood in the back from the start. Only at this moment, did they suddenly open their mouth to talk. Immediately, it drawn the attention of several people in front. Amongst them, an elderly man dressed in golden clothes said with a deep voice, "Impudent! In front of the Lord Goddess's Worshipper, when will it be your turn to speak!"

Fear appeared in the Second Manager's eyes as he hurriedly said, "Yes Owner."

"There's no harm in listening to what he has to say, just in case, it has something to do with the Ice Snow Goddess's stone." The Ice Snow Goddess's Worshiper's gaze fell on the body of the Second Manager. As her gaze set on him, his whole body only felt a burst of ice-cold seemingly like he was all naked and didn't have any secrets.

"Ye-yes, Great Goddess's Worshiper. So, it's like this, last night, Third Brother, who is Grand Pavilion's third manager, unexpectedly had an unfortunate encounter with his murderer. The person who killed him is a mage."

"What kind of magic killed him?" The Ice Snow Goddess's Worshiper's speech was very succinct.

The Second Manager looked distracted a bit before he said, "I don't have much comprehension towards magic, but it seems to be large fireballs."

The Owner of the Grand Pavilion said in anger, "Does your brain has a problem? Didn't you heard what the Great Goddess's Worshiper said earlier? What does that had anything to do with the Ice Snow Goddess's stone? You get out of here, don't waste her time!"

The Second Manager anxiously said, "No, Boss! You have to let me finish. Although, Third Brother was killed by the fireballs, but

it's very strange. His whole body was bombarded by fireballs and caught inside a sea of fire until he was charred into charcoal. Yet, his head did not turned black like the rest of his body. Instead, there was a layer of cold frost covering it. Up until now, there has yet exist something like this. Perhaps, perhaps..."

A cold light flashed inside the Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper's eyes. She coldly said, "Bring the dead body here for me to examine."

"Yes, Great Goddess's Worshipper." The owner of the Grand Pavilion hurriedly responded. It took a moment to carry Manager Liao's corpse. Because of the burning heat of the exploding fire, his whole body had long since become a piece of burnt charcoal. The stench of it directly assailed their nostrils making everyone with no choice, but to cover their nose. A layer of white light enveloped the Goddess's Worshipper's body. Without anyone seeing her using her power, she had already appeared in front of the corpse. Her lilly-white hands like spring onions emerged from white chang pao and stretched down into the empty air. Through the use of her spirit force, she condensed the ice element on the burnt black corpse in a flash. Perhaps, no else had sense what she did, but as the president of the Ice Moon Empire's Mage Association Headquarter and Wind Magic Scholar, Long Zhi, exclaimed in admiration in his heart. Although because of his status, it wasn't the first time he saw a Divine Descent's abilities, but it's the first time, he saw the Ice Moon Empire's teachers of the state, Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper, use her magic. Without even the need to chant, she can easily activate a search spell with her spirit. She truly deserved her title has the best mage on the continent.

The Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper slowly raised her head. In

her eyes, a cold light was emitted. Her sight fell on the Second Manager. “Speak! Tell me the details of last night’s situation.”

Second Manager made a sound in agreement and hurriedly with fear and trepidation carefully described in details once everything that happened yesterday’s night, not daring to omit anything as he felt the invisible and enormous power of the Ice Snow Goddess’s Worshipper pressing down on him. He retold about the matter of Third Liao going to visit prostitutes not daring to conceal anything. When he spoke about the black clothed man who called himself the Magic Reaper, everyone’s complexion couldn’t help become unsightly. On Venerate Light continent, the people that were most loathed weren’t prostitutes, thieves or bandits, but killers, particularly close combat mages who killed as a business were the most disgusting. The reason being that no matter how high the mage’s rank was, if the mage was a bit careless and encounter a killer that made a sneak attack, it would be very difficult to luckily escape. However, it was the first time that they heard about a killer being a mage. Moreover, it was clearly not an ordinary mage.

Chapter 14.1 – Menacing Goddess Worshipper

After hearing the Second Manager's story, the Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper slowly nodded. "Magic Reaper, huh? It looks like there should have been more than one person at that time. You are quite intelligent to be able to find some clues on the cause of death from the condition of Third Liao's body. You are correct to think that the cause of his death wasn't from the Exploding Flame. Before the Exploding Flame, his head was already injured by ice magic, and his brain immediately suffered a baptism of ice. The Exploding Flame was just a cover; he had already died from the ice magic. As you can all see, although his head was a bit charred, it was still kept intact because of the initial freezing. By examining it with my spirit force, I was able to discover a very small wound, the size of a needle. He was killed by an attack shaped into something similar to a needle. Moreover, his head clearly had the aura of the Ice Snow Goddess's stone. It's obvious that this attack was created through the use of the Ice Snow Goddess's stone. This killer is a mage with an extremely high magic control power. To be able to condense the ice into something akin to a needle and to use it to pierce through hard skull, he should have at least the strength of a Magic Scholar, the presence of a fire mage clearly only serve as a cover. With the combination of two Magic Killers would that scenario be plausible. Long Zhi, use all possible means to gather all the ice Magic Scholars here. Whoever has the Ice Snow Goddess's stone aura on his body is the murderer."

Long Zhi hesitated, then all of a sudden, said, "Goddess's Worshipper, I think that there shouldn't be a mage under my leadership who could be the killer. You should also know that on the continent, a mages' status is very high. Considering the

identity of Third Manager Liao, I fear there was no need to use a Magic Scholar rank mage to dispose of him. Two mages teaming and coordinating to kill, just this point is clearly fishy enough. I still hope you can wisely reexamine this matter.””

The Goddess's Worshipper clearly had a good opinion of Long Zhi. She didn't ruthlessly rebuke him, like she did with the Marquis, and calmly said, "Although what you said is rational, however, there is also a saying, 'One may know a person for a long time without understanding his true nature'. You bring all of them here. I'll be the one inspecting them, and naturally, everything will soon be clear. It looks like it won't be too long until I obtain the Ice Snow Goddess's stone; the number of ice Magic Scholars are very few. That man lurking in the shadows is far from simple. Do it as I have advised you. In a fight, you must settle everything in the shortest amount of time. At the same time, divide the other mages under your command to guard the four gates of Ice Snow city. Do you understand what I mean?"

Long Zhi respectfully nodded his head and replied, "I'm taking my leave then." As he finished speaking, his whole body flashed with green light. By the time everyone returned to their senses, he had already disappeared. The Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper's eyes displayed a strange light. She inwardly thought that Long Zhi truly deserved to be called as the continent's most outstanding magic genius. He was merely fifty something years old, but his wind magic had already reached the point of perfection. If he received some guidance, maybe, in less than twenty years, Ice Moon Empire would see the appearance of another Divine Descendant, a wind Divine Descendant. However, did he really need to work so hard? The Ice' God's Pagoda's dignity must not be infringed upon.

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Nian Bing was chopping firewood inside the firewood house. It hadn't been long since he answered, but dodged most, of Uncle Li's questions with great difficulty. The Clever King of the kitchen, Ming Yuan shocked him. His proficient cooking skills were in no way attainable through practice alone. He really deserved to be the head chef of Pure Wind House. Contrary to what he had imagined, there was still some difference between him and Ming Yuan. In fact, if they were to cook the same Golden Aromatic Ring, even at his fastest, he would be a bit slower than Ming Yuan. Although Ming Yuan had already figured out a few things about him, but Xue Jing had yet to find anything. Perhaps, she helped him learn about Ming Yuan's Golden Aromatic Ring in order to compensate for the slap which still marked his face red.

Thinking about this, Nian Bing couldn't refrain from bitterly laughing and touching the bandage that covered his face. Although the swelling of the palm imprint had gradually reduced, it would still need at least another two days to fully recover. 'This slap of hers was really heavy! Anyway, that Xue Jing has such a strong and beautifully lovable body. Now that I think about it, she had a really excessive attractiveness. Her skin felt... Ah! Stop, stop, stop! Out of my head, away with these thoughts!' Nian Bing was inwardly cursing himself. What was he doing, thinking about all these messed up things. He still had a big hatred that was still unavenged. Now, the most important thing was to increase his strength, and to not let his mind wander on other things. For the time being, he also shouldn't visit Feng Nu. If she saw the palm imprint on his face, he wouldn't know how to explain it. For the same reason, he also wouldn't go to the Mage Association, not until after a few days. He was at loss on what to do for now. Like this, three days passed by peacefully with him holing up in the firewood

house unaware, that thanks to Xue Jing's slap, he inadvertently avoided a deadly calamity.

After three days has passed by, Nian Bing started to act like a normal servant. Every day, he simply chopped firewood. Apart from his daily tasks, his time was spent quietly cultivating the his ice and fire pair magic. During the time he cultivated, the Ice Snow Goddess's stone simply absorbed the ice element from heaven and earth without releasing any ice magic. Therefore, even if the Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper's ability was powerful, it was impossible to discover his location. Nian Bing kept waiting for Ming Yuan to come find him, but he had yet to show up, even during mealtime. What's more, he also didn't eat any meals with the other chefs due to the other day when Xue Jing got him the chance to watch Ming Yuan make the Golden Aromatic Ring. They had all alienated him, except for Uncle Li. The kitchen staff basically didn't take the initiative to talk to him. However, Nian Bing was happy since he could get some peace, and naturally didn't take the initiative to greet them.

After three days, the palm imprint on his face had finally disappeared. In the morning, when he had finished his work, he went to Uncle Li and told him about it. Then he quietly slipped away from the back door of Pure Wind House.

Right now, the Ice Snow City's north gate already had a thousand soldiers completely guarding it under martial law. The city's Lord, the Mage Association's president, and all the influential figures in Ice Snow City, at this moment, all inwardly let out a sigh of relief. In their heart, the one they deemed as the Pestilence God was finally leaving. How can they not feel glad? Three days of rigorous searching and they still couldn't find the man the Goddess's

Worshipper wanted. The two ice Magic Scholars in the Mage Association was also investigated through her spirit. In order for the normal activities in Ice Snow City to resume, the Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper had no choice but to give up the search for the time being.

“Lord Marquis. This time, many thanks for your assistance. Perhaps, that person who's in possession of the Ice Snow Goddess's stone had already left Ice Snow City. I will continue to track him down. In the case you find something, immediately report the news to the Ice' God's Pagoda. Magic Scholar Long Zhi, I'm asking for your cooperation in this matter. If an unfamiliar ice Magic Scholar appeared, you must find out all about his background. Is that clear?”

The Marquis and Long Zhi both agreed before escorting the Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper out of the city. The white gown's wide sleeve lightly fluttered as white light from heaven and earth condensed into a floating snowflake that was the size of palm. Unexpectedly, the Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper stepped on that snowflake and flew away. Her divine and brilliant skills made people gasp in amazement.

Watching the Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper depart, the Marquis couldn't refrain from relaxing. He and Long Zhi looked at each other, unable to stop themselves from laughing bitterly. “Old Long, it's already noon. I'll be the host. Let's go to Pure Wind House to eat a meal. I know you like the light food there. These past few days had kept me nervous to the utmost as I feared that I wouldn't be able to serve her in a satisfactory way!”

Long Zhi slightly smiled and said, "It should be me inviting Lord Marquis. These past few days were also the same for me, even my cultivation time had been drastically reduced. I believe that Pure Wind House's Bamboo Bark Wine should help us keep the pressure under control. I came to an agreement with Big Brother Xue, this time, I coerced him into taking out a thirty year old fermented Bamboo Bark Wine for us to taste. Big Brother Xue, you cannot be stingy." As he spoke, Long Zhi looked at a white clothed middle-aged man not too far behind him. The white clothed middle-aged man looked to be only around forty years old. His appearance was extremely fresh and elegant, similar to a scholar. The Grand Pavilion's Owner dressed in golden clothes was standing right next to him. The instant he heard the Marquis and the Mage Association's president choose to go to Pure Wind House, his complexion seemed to darken somewhat.

The white clothed middle-aged man helplessly laughed and said, "You two! Can't you just spare me?! Drink, drink! Anyway, just don't drink the whole thing. Jin Hao, old friend, want to go drink together?"

The Grand Pavilion's owner indifferently said, "Thanks a lot Big Brother Xue Yu, but the Grand Pavilion still had many matters that I need to resolve. There's also Third Liao's recent funeral. I simply have to go. Some other time, I'll go visit you to offer my apologies."

Xue Yu slightly smiled, "It's also not good to force someone. Lord Marquis, Long Zhi, let us go. There were too many things to do these past few days. Because the city was sealed, we at the Pure Wind House also suffered a lot from the consequences it brought."

From Xue Yu's reminders, the Marquis slapped his forehead and suddenly said, "Look at this memory of mine. Send someone to immediately pass my order to lift the restrictions on the sealing of the city. Go! Today, I want to drink a lot. These two days had truly exhausted me. I'm old. My body is not working. Ah! Old Xue, can you ask that Clever King of kitchen to personally cook today? His Green Bamboo Banquet suits my taste best right now."

Chapter 14.2 – Menacing Goddess Worshipper

Nian Bing made seven turns and took eight detours before he arrived at the door of Shui Huo Metal shop. His left hand held green vegetables and meat. He lightly knocked several times on the door. “Feng Nu, are you there?”

There were sounds of footsteps before the door opened. Feng Nu peaked her head out from the doors, and when she saw it was Nian Bing, she couldn’t refrain her laughter. She hurriedly open the door and said, “Come in! Great chef, what’s on the menu today?”

Nian Bing bitterly laughed and said, “I was thinking about coming a few days ago, but there was too many things to resolve, so I wasn’t able to visit you until now. It’s quite embarrassing. Today, I will certainly make you something good to eat.”

Feng Nu’s bright eyes gently blinked. With a smile, she spoke, “I was just teasing you, no need to take it so seriously. Besides, you had matters you needed to take care off. It doesn’t matter what I eat. In fact, up until now, I wasn’t thinking about what you’re going to cook. If I eat too much of your meat, my taste will get spoiled. What would I do when you’re gone then?” After she finished speaking, only then, did she realize the meaning of her words and couldn’t stop from blushing. She hurriedly turned her body and led Nian Bing inside. Watching Feng Nu’s perfect silhouette, Nian Bing secretly nodded his head. When considering appearance and figure, Xue Jing and Long Ling’er had a different charm compared to Feng Nu, especially with her noble and elegant manners. It even gave people a favorable impression. What’s more,

she was gentle and soft, a perfect woman. If it was said that his heart wouldn't be moved, then that was absolutely deceiving himself. It was just that, right now, he only considered Feng Nu as a friend as his thoughts were all concentrated on how to improve his cooking skills and his magic. Until the matters with the Ice' God's Pagoda ended, he didn't wish to think about others things.

Coming into the courtyard, Nian Bing lifted his head to look upon the colored sky, and said with a slight smile, "I'm going to cook in the kitchen first. It will only take a moment."

Feng Nu glanced back with a laugh and said, "You don't need to hurry. You can rest for a bit first. That's right! Today, you don't need to do such a troublesome thing. It's really embarrassing since you are a guest. I should make you something to eat instead. Oh! I'm such a big idiot. Besides congee, I don't know how to cook anything else."

Nian Bing watched Feng Nu's smiling face and couldn't help but turn silly. He mumbled a reply, "Feng Nu, you're really pretty. Ah! Excuse me, I'll go cook first." As soon as he finished speaking, he ran to the kitchen as if he was being chased by something.

As she watched Nian Bing enter the kitchen, a strange light appeared in Feng Nu's eyes. Her gentle and soft look disappeared, replaced by a grave and stern look as she seemed to ponder about something. She thought out loud, "Let's forget about it. As far as I'm concerned, obtaining the Heavenly Flame sword is already sufficient and there is no need to be greedy for his Flame God's stone, right? Him cooking something for me, it's just letting him off lightly. I believe the elders will not blame me for this. This man

called Nian Bing is very odd; there are surprisingly so many treasures on his body. If it were Elder Sister instead of me, I'm afraid there would be nothing left on him. Forget about it. It doesn't matter. Let's properly make the True Sun knife as it should be considered a favor to Old Man Hua Tian." Saying so, the cold light in Feng Nu's eyes gradually faded away and, once again, she gazed towards the kitchen with a trace of perplexity.

This time, the cooking speed was certainly much faster. Last time, the reason why Nian Bing chose to make the extremely complicated pigeon meat dish was just because of the lack of ingredients. This time, he brought fresh vegetables and meat. It was much easier to make something from this. After 30 minutes, the whole Shui Huo Metal shop was already brimming with an enticing aroma. He made the standard four dishes and a soup, with every dish having their own distinctive appearance. From the color and the smell, it was already enough to determine these dishes were high quality. Nian Bing used a table in the courtyard to put the dishes on. Wiping the sweat from his forehead, he smiled and then, yelled towards the room. "Feng Nu! It's time to eat. Come here quickly!"

"Ah! It's such a good smell. Finally, I won't need to drink congee again." When the faint fragrance assaulted her nose, her speed was extremely quick as she dashed to the table. Nian Bing just thought that she was like a flower in front of his eyes with the chopsticks already in her hand.

Feng Nu dragged a stool towards Nian Bing, but her eyes didn't leave the table at all. "Wow! Did you cook all of this? How come everything you make looks like a work of art? It makes me not have the heart to eat it." Although she said that, her chopsticks

were already eager to pick up the food. She directly picked from a sparkling and translucent reddish food from a two colored meat and vegetables dishes.

Nian Bing said with a smiling and laughing face, “If no one eats something a chef has produced then that would be his biggest defeat. I don’t wish for that. You can really eat. Knowing your capacity to eat, I especially made much more today. There should be enough leftovers from the Four Element dishes for you to warm up for tonight’s supper. The flavor shouldn’t change too much after warming up.”

Feng Nu held between her chopsticks an unknown golden-colored food and put it into her mouth. When she took a bite, she clearly felt the tender and smooth meat and its juice overflowed throughout her mouth in two bites, spreading a salty taste which forcefully opened up her appetite. Nian Bing handed her a bowl of cooked rice and said with a smile, “This dish is a little bit salty and goes well with rice.”

Feng Nu watched Nian Bing and sighed in admiration, “Extremely wonderful! When I mentioned that someone’s taste in food can be completely messed up by you, it seems like this it wasn’t too much of an exaggeration. Ah! Why are you not eating? What was the thing I ate just now? Such a tender meat. Don’t tell me, is it fish? What’s more, there’s not a hint of a fishy smell!”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “I already ate before coming here. At our place, we need to work until noon so I ate my breakfast a bit before coming here. I’m not hungry right now. Later, when I return, I’ll be just in time for supper and will not be able to

accompany you in your meal. What you just ate is not fish meat. This is a very common vegetable, and I used it to make a meat dish called Red Golden Frog. The red-colored food is round, small hot pepper, and what you ate earlier was frog meat. Frog meat is very tender. When it enters the mouth, it's very fresh and sweet. It's the best amongst meat. If the fishy smell is eliminated, the meat can become very tasty. Quickly eat it, I prepared more food for you to eat."

There was no need for Nian Bing to speak as Feng Nu proceeded to stuff herself, placing one mouthful of food after another while expressing her admiration towards Nian Bing's exceptional cooking skills.

"Nian Bing, you just said our place, could it be that you have someone you know in Ice Snow City?" Feng Nu asked while still eating.

Nian Bing shook his head and said, "No. I had found some work, that's all. You should also know that place, it's the Pure Wind House inside the city. It's not very far from here."

"Pure Wind House? Ah, that restaurant where everything is very expensive! I have yet to eat there. But I heard the food is pretty good. For your skills, that place is certainly the best with their big kitchen. Although I have yet to eat there, I can be certain that the food made by the Pure Wind House's chefs are not as delicious as yours."

Nian Bing slightly smiled and said, "You have guessed incorrectly. I'm not there to cook. Besides my master, you are the

first person to taste my cooking. At Pure Wind House, I'm only chopping firewood."

Pfft! Feng Nu spurted out the mouthful of rice she had in her mouth and coughed loudly, which startled Nian Bing. Nian Bing gave her a bowl of soup and patted her supple back. The soup passed through her red lips and entered her mouth with a certain impatience. At this moment, the way he looked at her was much more affectionate.

As the bowl of warm soup settled into her stomach, Feng Nu slowly managed to cough out the food that went down the wrong way. She gasped with her mouth opened wide and angrily said, "You almost choked me to death! Even if you want to joke, you don't need to go this far."

Nian Bing helped her get over her coughing fit by patting her back as he said to her with a bitter smile, "Who's playing a joke on you. I'm really just chopping logs in Pure Wind House. Your mind capacity to bear is also pretty bad. First, regulate your breath."

Feng Nu watched Nian Bing in shocked and exclaimed, "Are you really chopping firewood there? You don't have a fever?" Saying so, she extended her soft and slender hand to touch Nian Bing's forehead. Following the warm touch of her small hand came a sweet fragrant. Nian Bing's heart shook from the feeling of the soft hand on his skin. He grabbed her hand and said, "I'm all right. I chose to chop firewood there. It's just that I unexpectedly revealed their kitchen's recipe. The skills of the head chef of Pure Wind House, the Clever King of kitchen, Ming Yuan, are excellent. I'm there only to observe what kind of special skills he had. Anyway,

why should I need to reveal myself? If they knew I possessed genuine kitchen skills, I fear it will be very difficult to leave.”

Feng Nu’s voice suddenly dropped. She lowered her head and said, “You, you let go of me first. What kind of manner is that?”

Nian Bing’s heart was alarmed as he discovered his right hand was still holding Feng Nu’s hand. As for his left hand, it had long since stop patting her back and currently residing on her waist. Feng Nu’s whole lovably flexible body was already completely leaning onto his chest. In such intimate proximity, Nian Bing couldn’t help but be perplexed. In a flurry, he released both of his hands. Even though he was intelligent, in this kind of awkward situation, he didn’t know what he could say. Mouth agape and tongue-tied, he quickly put back the chopsticks in Feng Nu’s hands. Coughing twice, he then turned his sight onto a tree outside the courtyard.

Chapter 14.3 – Threatening The Goddess's Worshipper

Feng Nu was eating slower than before. Although she was continuously eating, her feelings were very complicated; she felt a peculiar, unceasing sensation in the depth of her heart. She knew perfectly well that she shouldn't have such emotions, but she couldn't stop herself from occasionally stealing a few glances at Nian Bing. This time, she ate less of the meal than the pigeon meat on rice from the previous one, and didn't even finish half of her food before putting down her chopsticks. Nian Bing wanted to help her clean up, but was stopped by Feng Nu with a single glance. She flatly said, "It's my turn. You take a seat for a moment and I will finish cleaning up."

Nian Bing got up. His mood was as complicated as Feng Nu's. He lowered his head and said, "Feng Nu, I'll go first. I'll come back to see you in two days."

Feng Nu spoke with a bit of disappointment, "You're going already?"

Looking at the bitterness in her eyes, Nian Bing sighed deeply, as he found it very difficult to manage the situation. In his mind, if this continued, he feared that he would end up giving in to her, so he had to leave as soon as possible. As he thought about it, he no longer hesitated and nodded his head, "I have to return since I still have quite a lot of work that needs to be done. I can't take people's money without doing any work! As for the True Sun Knife, it's not that urgent. You must not exhaust yourself because of it. Rather, you should take your time."

Feng Nu nodded her head. She put the leftovers in the kitchen and accompanied Nian Bing to the entrance. With a faint smile, she said, "You should come over when you have some free time. Thank you for the lunch."

At that moment, Nian Bing's mind had already recovered somewhat. As he smiled, he said, "What thanks? I should be the one thanking you right now! I'm going back, then. You're only one woman in the house, so you must properly close the door. See you later!" As he finished speaking, he awkwardly left the Shui Huo Metal shop. Just a short while ago, he had immersed his mind inside the source of his fire and ice magic, which had the ability to steady his mind.

Feng Nu watched Nian Bing gradually disappear in the distance. She couldn't refrain from giggling anymore. "Foolish boy. As the disciple of the grand Demon Chef, he unexpectedly got hired by other people to chop firewood, and even believes he's properly thought it through. However, he truly is adorably foolish... If I brought him back with me, I wonder what the elders would think of his cooking skills. Ah, they are simply too exquisite!"

After departing from Shui Huo Metal shop, Nian Bing didn't go directly back to Pure Wind House. The agreed three days had already passed and he still didn't know whether the Mage Association would agree to his previous request. No matter what the decision would be, first, he needed to go there. As long as he could gain access to their library and be able to read the resources inside, even a single time would be enough, given his memorization ability. After that, he wouldn't need to go there anymore. It would take at most one month before he could leave

Ice and Snow City for his next destination. Due to his hatred towards the Ice God's Pagoda, Nian Bing had become cold by nature and even partially egocentric. Except for his revenge, improving his abilities, and pursuing the summit of cooking skills, he didn't give much thought to anything else.

Finally, the Ice and Snow City lifted the prohibition. It could be seen clearly from the bustling noises and excitement on the main streets. Because of the city being sealed the past few days, ordinary people didn't dare to go out. Now, all the shops were purchasing everything they needed, especially the ones selling products for everyday uses. At this moment, the main street, as busy as a marketplace, could be said to be like the city's front yard. Witnessing the liveliness of the market street, Nian Bing's mood was uplifted. He recognized the way to the Mage Association and started towards it with big strides. The weather was stifling hot, but due to the fact that he was carrying the Ice Snow Goddess's stone inlaid in the Morning Dew knife, he didn't feel hot and stuffy. He strolled all the way there, watching the surroundings and doing as he pleased.

The Ice and Snow City was indeed very big. Although Nian Bing was walking very fast, it still took some time for him to finally arrive in front of the Mage Association. The pointed structure of the Mage Association's building was quite conspicuous. Since it was daytime, at the front entrance of the association stood two guards in mage gowns. Both of them seemed to be around 16-17 years old. On their mage gowns, there was a small and hardly noticeable symbol which identified them as mage apprentices. At most, they possessed the strength of Elementary Mages.

Advancing with big strides, Nian Bing walked to the Mage

Association's entrance. As he faced the two Elementary Mage guards, he said, "Hello. I'm looking for Magic Scholar Li De."

The Elementary Mage on the left looked at Nian Bing and asked with doubt, "You're looking for Magic Scholar Li De? What business do you have with him?"

Nian Bing answered, "It's like this – three days ago, I came to the Association to take the magic test. At that time, it was very late, so, Magic Scholar Li De told me to come find him the next day, but the following day there was the implementation of a seal-off for the whole of Ice and Snow City. That's the reason why I couldn't come at that time. As a matter of fact, today, the prohibition has just been lifted. So, I came here immediately. Truthfully, I'm very sorry about this matter, as I've made Magic Scholar Li De wait."

The two young Elementary Mage both displayed astonishment in their eyes. The mage on the right asked, "You, you're that young Great Mage comparable to Big Sister Long Ling?"

Nian Bing stared blankly and replied, "You also know about me? The other day, Magic Scholar Li De did mention that I already have the strength of a Great Mage."

The Elementary Mage on the left looked at Nian Bing with strange eyes as he spoke, "The past two days, the president ordered us to go find you in the city, but we couldn't find you. At last, you've arrived! Follow me inside."

Something stirred inside Nian Bing's heart. He thought to

himself that even if his magic strength wasn't weak, it didn't really need the Mage Association President to personally give an order to find him. He feared there was something fishy going on. Nevertheless, he had to be careful with everything. While he was thinking, he followed the Elementary Mage into the Mage Association. As he walked, he inwardly simulated all kinds of situations and all kinds of ways to extricate himself from them.

The Elementary Mage lead Nian Bing to a room inside the Association. As he gave Nian Bing a cup of water, he said, "Wait here first. I'm going to notify Magic Scholar Li De."

The room he was left in was very big. It seemed to be the one meant to receive guests. On the wall, there were murals similar to the ones he had seen in the magic testing lounge last time. Even though it was now on the table, it was still the same six-pointed star design.

Not much time had passed by when footsteps could suddenly be heard. The Water Magic Scholar Li De walked into the room through the door. Suddenly, Nian Bing felt a formidable power oppressing him. He turned his head to look and only saw Li De's gaze being somewhat strange as he just stood there watching him.

"Magic Scholar Li De, good evening." Nian Bing hurriedly stood up and respectfully greeted Li De.

Li De calmly said, "Good evening. I've already been waiting three days for you. The sealing of the city was only for things pertaining to outside matters. As for inside of the city, there wasn't any strong prohibition. It shouldn't have impeded you from coming

here.”

Nian Bing spoke without showing his feelings or intentions, “I’ve just recently arrived in Ice and Snow city. The sudden sealing of the city made me somewhat scared. Therefore, I chose to wait for the end of the prohibition before coming back here. I’m sincerely sorry about all of this.”

Li De frowned and asked, “Afraid? With the formidable spirit force of a mage, negative emotions such as fear shouldn’t easily appear.”

Nian Bing faintly blushed and answered, “I came from a small place. I’ve never seen such big event before. It’s truly such a loss of face.”

Li De had been continuously watching Nian Bing and surrounding Nian Bing with his spirit force from the very beginning. However, no matter how much he observed him, he was unable to find the slightest inconsistency in Nian Bing’s behaviour or speech. He smiled indifferently and said, “Since it was just something like that , follow me. From this moment onward, you are a part of the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association. Let’s go. The ceremony has long since been ready for you.” He turned around and went outside after he’d finished talking.

Nian Bing hurriedly followed behind Li De. As he walked behind him, Nian Bing silently condensated the power of the source of his fire and ice magic, just in case something happened. Although the other party was a Magic Scholar, if he were to simultaneously use two kinds of opposing magic elements to sneak attack, it could

confuse Li De for a moment and that would allow him to escape in the meantime. While he was walking, in his mind, he was secretly baffled. Why would a Magic Scholar want to probe him? Could it be that the matter about him killing Liao had been exposed? Liao was only a manager of the Grand Pavilion and there was no need for a grand Magic Scholar like him to appear for that matter.

His thoughts led him to be doubtful, but Nian Bing still followed Li De, and entered the Mage Association's main hall. The hall was exceptionally wide. Compared to the magic testing lounge from last time, it was much bigger. Inside the hall, there were several people discussing with Li De. Everyone of them, from short to tall, all had different symbols on their chests, representing their specific magic system. If it was wind magic, the symbol would be a tiny cyan tornado. If it was fire, it would be a red colored flame. Since everyone was wearing magic gowns that suited their magic attributes, the colors were all different, however those tiny symbols on their chests were very difficult to differentiate. When one of them would finally reach the realm of Advanced Mage, the tiny symbol would be surrounded by a silver colored circle. When they reached the realm of Great Mage, there would be a total of three silver circles. After they became Magic Scholar, the symbol representing their status would be enlarged and turned into a golden color at the same time. It didn't matter if they were a fire, wind, or any other kind of mage, the symbol was gold in color. That was a standard rule that was agreed upon by all the mages from the five empires. As for Magisters, who were almost the strongest mages, their symbols would return to the original color, but their element symbols would be surrounded by a hexagram. It looked just like the symbol on the chest of the Ice Moon Empire's Mage Association president, Long Zhi.

Inside the hall there were five mages chatting with each other.

Among them, there were two mages who seemed to be around the same age as Li De. Unexpectedly, they were both Magic Scholars. As for the other three people, they had the Great Mage's symbol. They were obviously the Mage Association's elites. When Li De lead Nian Bing inside, Nian Bing's sight was automatically set on them. Among them, the one who had the Magic Scholar's symbol for fire magic smiled and said, "Li De, is this the new mage that you'd tested the other day? Just from his appearance, it's quite difficult to believe it!"

Chapter 15.1 – The Mage Association

Seeing so many high level mages, the first thing Nian Bing did was to cautiously conceal the power of his fire and ice magic source, especially the aura of his fire magic power. With this many high level mages, never mind escaping, even the slightest movement could cause him to suffer merciless attacks. Hearing the words of the fire Magic Scholar, he hurriedly came forward and respectfully said, “Nian Bing greets his seniors.” The fire Magic Scholar who had been talking earlier seemed very straightforward. He laughed out loud and said, “You must stop calling us seniors. The scholarly do not have hierarchy, and respect is up to the person. At your age, I had only just entered the realm of Advanced Mage. At that time, I had what was considered to be an extremely fast cultivation. Welcome, and congratulations on becoming a member of our Ice Moon Empire’s Mage Association.”

At this moment, because the status of the three Great Mages was lower, they had already retreated to the side. In front of the Magic Scholars, Great Mages had to capitulate.

The symbol on the chest of the other Magic Scholar was a golden ice crystal. It was clearly evident that the person was an Ice Magic Scholar. He didn’t resemble the fire Magic Scholar’s friendly attitude, as he coldly snorted and his body started emitting a cold and gloomy aura.

Li De walked until he was standing next to the two Magic Scholars. He turned to Nian Bing before saying, “The Association stipulates that for any new members entering the Association, there must be at least one Magic Scholar Elder holding the ceremony. In case the member is someone who has the strength of

an Advanced Mage, the norm allows other mages to hold the ceremony. As for you, you have already attained the strength of a Great Mage. Therefore, I invite you today, along with two more Association Elders, to hold your ceremony. Unfortunately, the president is out for business. If not for that, he would be the one holding your ceremony, which would be more suitable. Please step forward and stand in the middle of this hexagram.” Li De pointed at a place on the floor.

Nian Bing agreed and walked until he was in between the three Magic Scholars, and stood in the middle of the golden hexagram. Li De displayed a faint smile and said, “I, water Magic Scholar Li De, according to my status as the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association Elder, especially hold this ceremony. Great Elemental Gods, please be the witnesses for Nian Bing’s investment as a Great Mage of the Association. Everything is for the honor, the glory, and the pride of the Association! Devote yourself to the Association. Nian Bing, I ask you. Do you wish to serve and fully devote yourself to the Association?”

“I do,” Nian Bing replied without any hesitation, as this ‘devotion’ had a very vague meaning. However, the binding of the contract was extremely powerful. Was becoming a member of the Mage Association not akin to being confined in an immense cage? Although Nian Bing had spoken one thing, in his heart he had added two more words to the promise. Put together, it had turned into: I wish to fart.

Li De faintly smiled as he turned to the side and faced a Great Mage and nodded his head. That Great Mage’s gown was very strange. It was silver. The Great mage took a few steps forwards, mumbling several incantations in a loud voice, and a silvery light

flashed. In his once empty hand, there was now a light blue mage's robe with the symbol of an ice mage at the front. Although ice and water magic were of common origin, the color for the ice mage's gown was lighter than the one on the water mage's gown. When Nian Bing saw the mage's robe sudden appearance, he inwardly thought, 'Is that spatial magic?' In the magic world, apart from the four basic elements of water, fire, earth and wind, there were few other less usual ones. There was ice magic, which derived from water, and thunder, which was an unusual one, similar to spatial magic. As for light and dark magic, they were rarely seen kinds of magic. Usually, on the continent, only spatial mages could still be seen sometimes, while light magic and dark magic only existed in legends. These two types of magic were already considered extinct. However, when Nian Bing was a child, Rong Tian had told him that these two types of magic weren't quite extinct. In fact, only a few people with special bodies would have the ability to understand those kinds of magic. As for the capabilities of light and dark magic, although they couldn't be compared to any other magic types, they possessed other special properties which made them very difficult to deal with. Later, if he had the opportunity, he would ask the spatial Great Mage for some guidance. It would be good if he could see spatial magic for himself, since he had heard spatial mages used a special type of magic that allowed them to stockpile things. If he could use that very convenient kind of magic, he wouldn't need to carry many things with him. In addition, he would be able to buy and store many more seasonings.

It was impossible for Li De to know that Nian Bing was thinking of using spatial magic to pack more seasonings. Li De took the gown from the spatial mage and walked until he was in front of Nian Bing, saying, "May the Elemental God bless you. Child, put on this magic gown. In just a moment, you will become a member of the Association. We will all be your family and friends."

Seeing the sincerity in Li De's gaze, Nian Bing's heart couldn't help but be somewhat bewildered. It had been a long time since he had been bewildered to this degree. He took the magic gown in Li De's hands and put it on. The size fit him perfectly. It was clear that it had been customized to fit his body size. The light blue magic gown felt unusually good. It was obviously made from special materials, because a faint magic aura was being emitted from the gown. Although it wasn't too powerful, the gown was absorbing the ice elements, which was certainly a benefit. Inside the lapel of the magic gown, a moon was embroidered with silver thread, and a white ice crystal was embroidered as a background. It was the symbol of the Ice Moon Empire.

Looking at the ice crystal on his chest, surrounded by three circles of silver threads, Nian Bing's heart was moved. 'Father, Mother, Are you seeing this? Right now, your child has already become a Great Mage, a dual element Great Mage! You've waited. It won't be too long now. I can certainly go once again to the Ice God's Pagoda.'

Li De watched Nian Bing properly put on the Great Mage's ice magic gown and couldn't help but praise Nian Bing's handsome appearance; the sumptuous magic gown highlighted his features. He appeared smarter and brighter, giving off a good impression with his star-like bright eyes. Faintly laughing, he said, "As expected, clothes make the man. Just by putting on the magic gown, he already looks more like a genuine Ice Moon Empire mage."

Nian Bing respectfully saluted the three Magic Scholars. "Many thanks for your help."

Once again, Li De nodded to the spatial mage. A silvery light flashed and, this time, an elaborate magic rod appeared, with a silver colored badge. In the middle of the badge, there was the same Ice Moon Empire's symbol with the ice crystal. There was also a transparent gem embedded on the badge, emitting a magic fluctuations. The magic rod, only 33 centimeters long, was blue in color. On one end of the rod there was a white gem that radiated a faint frosty mist. Although it couldn't be compared to the Ice Snow Goddess's stone, it was also a hard to come by top-grade gem.

First, Li De made a hexagonal badge appear and gave it to Nian Bing. "This is an Ice Moon Empire Mage Association's badge. As a Great Mage, your value is equivalent to an entire troop of soldiers. With this badge, you can dispatch troops under 1000 soldiers in any army camp from any of the nine major cities of Ice Moon Empire for combat. At the same time, you can also receive your remuneration from any branch of the Association. The remuneration is different, according to rank. Right now, you can receive 20 purple coins every month. The badge has a special mark that is impossible to counterfeit. Therefore, you must take care to not lose it. In case you lose it, immediately report it as soon as possible. We can seal and cancel the badge's functions."

'20 purple coins! That's the equivalent of 200 gold coins! In addition to the privileges of the badge, this is the most valuable treasure I have ever owned! It looks like a lifelong commitment comes with lifelong authority. No wonder father once said that entering a Mage Association is what average mages yearn for even in their dreams. It will be much easier to travel all around the continent with this.' After he thanked Li De, he carefully placed his badge inside his chest pocket.

At this moment, Li De took the magic rod and said with a smile, “This magic rod is called Icicle. At first, with your level of cultivation, the Association cannot immediately give you such a precious magic rod, but the President and I have discussed it. Since the President saw you as a young Great Mage with unlimited prospects, he has decided to give you your reward for when you reach the Magic Scholar’s realm early on. Here it is! With this, your chanting time will be reduced by a third. The same also applies to the time you need to condense magic power. The ice can also listen to your commands. You must take care of it properly, because this magic rod is categorized as a gold grade magic item.”

“Gold grade? Magic Scholar Li De, what is a gold grade item?” Nian Bing voiced out his query. He didn’t know anything about the different grades of magic items.

Chapter 15.2 – The Mage Association

Li De gave a slight smile and said, “It seems that although you have been in contact with magic for a decent amount of time, you still do not truly understand magic. Among the magic tools, gold ranked is already a fairly high level. Magic tools are divided into a total of six classes: god class, sub-god class, dark-gold class, gold class, silver class, and bronze class. Although gold class is only ranked fourth, you should know that if you were to sell that gold-ranked cane on the market, it would fetch over 1000 purple-gold coins. Dark-gold magic tools are extremely uncommon, while god and sub-god class equipment is extremely hard to get, even for the President. All he has is one sub-god level magic cane. According to rumours, true god class tools are only held by the Ice Snow Goddess’s top brass worshipers at the Ice God’s Pagoda. The form is unknown, but it is likely it’s not a staff.”

Nian Bing looked at the Icicle rod in his grasp, and his heart trembled. ‘If it’s like this, then what level will my Morning Dew Knife be at, if considered a staff? I’m afraid it is at least a dark-gold ranked treasure.’ After all, the Ice Snow Goddess’s stone obviously had a much better quality than the gem on the Icicle rod.

“Many thanks to all, Magic Scholars and the President, for your guidance. I will definitely strive hard in cultivation so that I may soon become a powerful mage.” After this tiger balm speech, Nian Bing’s thoughts had already flown to the Mage Association’s library. Right now, he had already received the necessary Ice magic spells and only needed to commit them to memory.

Li De smiled slightly and said, “Everything that should’ve been given to you has already been given, so the ceremony is completed.

Now, I will tell you the Association's rules, in order to save you from treading wrongly. You must commit the most important rules to memory. First of all, as a mage of the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association, no matter the time, you must unconditionally obey the association's assignment. In the case that the Association discovers a crisis, you must act as a Mage Corps member. As for the specific position, it depends on your current mage rank. The point is, you need to abide by your orders. If not, not only will your mage rank be revoked, but you will also receive strict discipline from the mage association."

Nian Bing nodded. Since he'd been given so much power, it was inevitable that it would come with responsibilities.

Li De continued, "Moreover, when the Ice Moon Empire meets a crisis, as members of the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association we have an obligation to help the Ice Moon Empire resist its enemies. In this kind of situation, you also need to unconditionally accept conscription and become a mage of the Ice Moon Empire Corps. Of course, in these circumstances, the Empire will pay you an additional compensation, and the remuneration will be significant. If you perform a meritorious deed, there will also be a further prize."

Hearing such words, Nian Bing's misgivings arose. 'Since this is the Mage Association of the Ice Moon Empire, shouldn't the empire's interest be first? Why is it, then, that in the rules the first tenet is rather to unconditionally listen to the orders given by the Mage Association? From what I can tell, it feels extremely strange. Could it be that what benefits the Mage Association does not benefit the empire?'

Li De continued to speak, “Lastly, after becoming a mage of the Association, if the Association needs you to assume a certain office, you need to comply and await further instructions. Of course, in your current circumstances, the Association won’t set you up in a post. Right now, the most important thing is for you to work hard and raise your own magic power. You must strive to quickly reach the realm of Magic Scholar. If you become a Magic Scholar, you will possess great authoritative power in the Mage Association, and you will also be rewarded by the Association’s Elders.”

Nian Bing didn’t let his feelings show on his face, nodded his head, and said “I will definitely comply with the orders of the Association. Are there any others?”

Li De said, peacefully, “These three are the most important. As for the other rules, they are merely minor clauses. Once you’ve reached the realm of Magic Scholar, the Association will naturally give you more authority, and of course, you will also be allowed to comprehend more of the affairs of the Association. See, right now, all five great empires of the continent have their own Mage Associations. The Ice Moon Empire, as a result of having the Ice God’s Pagoda, has always been known to have the strongest magical ability in the five empires. However, they don’t know that the Mage Association and Ice God’s Pagoda do not have mages of the same domain. The Ice God’s Pagoda only has a hundred Ice mages, but they also take orders from the Ice Snow Goddess’s worshipers. If you don’t count them, in the Five Empires, the Ice Moon Empire’s Mage Association is actually the weakest. The association has a total of one Magister, eight Magic Scholar Elders and thirty-nine Great Mages including you, with the rest being Elementary mages that number a little over a thousand. Overall, their strength is still very far away from the Ice God’s Pagoda. As for the other four empires, they all have at least two Magisters,

especially the Harmonic Flower Empire. They have as many as three fire Magisters, and word has it that the oldest fire mage alive is Prince Rong of the Harmonic Flower Empire. His strength has already approached the Descended God rank. Therefore, in order for us, the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association, to not fall behind, you need to work even harder to cultivate. Once your strength has grown, the Association's position, and even the whole empire's will be more advantageous, do you understand?"

Hearing Prince Rong, these words, Nian Bing's flesh couldn't help but twitch a little. How could he not know the might of the Harmonic Flower Empire's Mage Association? It was his hometown! At that time, if it had not been for Prince Rong dispatching great numbers of mages to hunt them down, he and his father would not have had to flee like stray dogs. Due to his father's aching heart, they went to the Ice God's Pagoda to rescue his mother, However, his father ended up in trouble instead. The Harmonic Flower Empire and Prince Rong were part of the reason for the pain embedded deep in Nian Bing's heart.

"Nian Bing, what are you thinking about? Are you all right?" Li De restlessly called out.

Nian Bing returned to the present?, and hastened to say, "Ah! Sorry, I was thinking that if, one day, our Ice Moon Empire Mage Association can also be of the same calibre as the Harmonic Flower Empire's Mage Association, I think that the Ice Moon Empire's position would not be much different from that of the Ice God Pagoda."

Li De let out a sigh and said, "That is merely a wish. To actually

achieve such a feat is easier said than done. Cultivating one excellent mage requires a great amount of time, and the number of true geniuses out there is pitiful. Right now, those who desire to cultivate magic are becoming more and more scarce. Martial arts is much easier to master in comparison to magic. Apart from being unable to perform large scale destruction and long-range attacks, martial arts does not have a very obvious weakness, like magic. As outdated as it is, I sincerely doubt that after a hundred years, an outdated cultivation method such as magic will still continue to exist on the continent.”

Off to the side, one of the Ice Magic Scholar’s eyebrows began to wrinkle and deeply said, “Li De, you talk too much. The ceremony has already ended, let’s leave it at that.”

Li De came to and hurriedly said, “Oh, right. I’m just an old geezer. Nian Bing, the ceremony has already finished; you should go meditate. I heard Shi Jiu and Ling’er say that you were hoping to learn a few ice magic spells. Come with me; I will bring you to the collective Association’s library. There, you can find all the things that you need.”

Hearing those words, Nian Bing could not help but feel extremely happy. What he desired most was finally here! He hastily made a sound in answer, and left the main hall of the temple with Li De. As he walked by the magic scholar’s side, he heard a faint whisper in his ear. “Boy, I’ll wait till you’re done; come to my quarters to find me. I’m staying in the Association’s lodgings’ westernmost room. Remember, you definitely must come! Understand?”

Nian Bing’s heart stirred a little, of course, he couldn’t answer at

this time. He could only silently nod his head behind Li De's back and walked out with Li De . It was clear that this was the first time he had seen the Ice Magic Scholar, so why would he want to meet alone with him? Could it be that he had some sort of objective? Never mind, right now he has already become a member of the Ice Moon Empire's Mage Association, so he wouldn't dare to stir up trouble now. Besides, he first had to go to the library to learn some useful things for him to use.

With Li De's guidance, Nian Bing bypassed the tall building near the ceremonial hall they had just left behind, and walked towards the very back of the Mage Association. From here on, everything was enormous. The back had a skylight, all the lofty buildings having been built extremely close, and connected one with another. He wasn't sure why, but such buildings gave people an oppressive feeling.

Chapter 15.3 – The Mage Association

Walking side by side, Li De told Nian Bing, “Later, I will arrange your living quarters for you. This is one of the privileges of a Great Mage.”

Nian Bing’s heart became heavy. He asked, “Magic Scholar Li De, then, may I still go outside?”

Li De slightly smiled and said, “Of course, you may. In the Association, apart from special orders, no one can restrict your freedom. You are completely free to come or go. You may even go outside to travel. I’ll assign a room to be a permanent residence for your return. However, I suggest you cultivate more and use your magic force to promote yourself to the next level. Currently, I’m looking forward to witnessing your breakthrough to the Magic Scholar’s realm. Come, we have already arrived at the library.” He led Nian Bing to the side and walked into a seemingly unremarkable building.

The interior of the building was very clean. When looking from the outside, it appeared to have four floors, and each floor wasn’t very high. This aspect gave the building an unremarkable impression. Li De faintly smiled and said, “This is the place. This library has a total of four floors. This is the only place on the continent that holds such an abundance of knowledge. You can read the books here, but you absolutely can’t borrow any of these books, especially the ones on the third and fourth floors. Oh, that’s right! You still can’t go to the fourth floor. Let me give you an introduction to the library. Similar to how mages have differences between each rank, each floor contains different kinds of information. For example, the first floor has information that is

mostly suitable for Elementary Mages and Intermediate Mages to read. The second floor is for the Advanced Mages and the Great Mages. Then there is the third floor which can only be entered when one has the strength of a Magic Scholar. As for the highest, not to mention, the smallest floor, a lot of records of extinct high-level magic are kept. Only those who have reached the realm of Magister and have the permission of the Mage Association's President are allowed to enter this floor to consult the materials. Although the President has yet to see you, the impression he has of you is very deep because of your magic control force almost reaching the realm of Magic Scholar. He specially informed me repeatedly that you are permitted to consult the magic books on the third floor. With this, you can learn many things. Later, when you travel outside for experience, what you see here will properly prepare you for your journey; you won't lack magic spells, nor will your own strength be badly affected. The President might return in a while. At that time, he will likely call you for a chat. In the case there are some parts you can't understand while reading, you can always ask for guidance from ice Magic Scholar Wa Lun. His magic level compared to mine is less profound. In the Association, he's only the Fourth Elder."

When Nian Bing looked at the two rows of bookshelves, his heart couldn't help but burst with a sudden urge to read. For a mage, this place is basically a treasure-trove. Of course, the books in the library weren't only about magic spells. The collection also included several records on magic, as well as notes left behind by mages. With those notes, it was already precious enough. "Teacher Li De, many thanks to you. May I address you in this way?"

Li De faintly smiled and said, "Of course you may. Watching you youngsters gradually grow, I truly feel a lot older. Nowadays, I merely wish that before I die, I would be able to see our Ice Moon

Empire Mage Association become more powerful and entrust everything to your young generation. If there is an opportunity, you and Ling'er should interact more since the both of you are similar to ice Great Mages. Although, when compared to you, Ling'er's magic force and magic control is still lacking. However, that girl is very smart. When it comes to magic, she already has her original views on it. If you two were to interact together more often, anyone would say that this is a good thing."

Nian Bing nodded his head and said, "I know. Thank you, Teacher Li De."

Li De softly sighed and continued, "I know you're aware of the lockdown that occurred these past few days. However, you might not know the true reason behind it. From what I see, you are a good and honest child. As soon as the President returns, it's possible that you will be questioned. You only need to reply according to the facts."

Nian Bing felt shaken inside. He asked, "Teacher Li De, what has occurred in the end? It's true, I do find it very odd when I carefully think about this unexpected lockdown. This shouldn't give any benefits to the Ice and Snow city. Visiting merchants not being able to enter must have been problematic."

Li De softly sighed and spoke, "That's also something we were helpless about. Who let them have such authority?"

Nian Bing asked, "In the end, what happened? Can you tell me?"

Li De glanced at Nian Bing and answered, “Good! It wasn’t originally anything of a secret. A few days ago, the reason the city was sealed had to do with a major character. In order to track down the whereabouts of an item, she came here. That item is said to be a very precious magic item. Perhaps, it could even be bordering the realm of god grade item’s magic power. I heard the President say that it was called something like the Ice Snow Goddess’s stone.”

Even if Nian Bing’s will was steady, when he suddenly heard the name Ice Snow Goddess’s stone, he couldn’t help but let his shock show on his face. Fortunately, at that instant, he was behind Li De, and the mage didn’t look back at his expression.

Nian Bing’s pulse clearly accelerated. He probed Li De with some questions. “Ice Snow Goddess’s stone? If it was so, then the person who came is from the Ice’ God’s Pagoda. Is that gem something that belongs to the Ice’ God’s Pagoda?”

Li De turned back and looked at Nian Bing. At that moment, Nian Bing had already recovered his composure. Other than an expression of astonishment on his face, there was nothing else to be seen. “Yes, it is something that belongs to the Ice’ God’s Pagoda. Therefore, it is said to be very precious, and it’s also the reason why she had personally come this time. She is our Ice Moon Empire’s representative and the Grand Preceptor of the Ice Snow Goddess’ worshippers.”

Nian Bing’s heart beat wildly. He was only ten years old that year when he once saw the Ice Snow Goddess’s Worshipper. He remembered it very clearly because the strength of his father, who

was a fire Magic Scholar, seemed like a child in front of the might of the Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper. He didn't have the slightest capability to resist her. If it wasn't for his mother, who went all out and risked her life to save his father, perhaps he would have already lost his life with only the first attack of the Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper. When he heard the name that he bitterly detested, his heart trembled. At this instant, he finally realized that the enforced martial law inside Ice and Snow City was unexpectedly because of him. However, how did the Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper once again discover that the Ice Snow Goddess's stone was in Ice and Snow City? Could it be that because he had used the Morning Dew knife at that time, and released the Ice Snow Goddess's stone aura, that led her here? That's right, it must have been like that.

Once he figured it was like this, Nian Bing's back couldn't help but be soaked in sweat. If he hadn't been careful during the three-day lockdown, and had used the Morning Dew knife even once, he feared that he would have already fallen into the hands of the Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper. 'Ah! It looked like I still need to keep a low-profile! Before my magic is strong enough, I must not let that woman find out about my existence.'

Li De watched Nian Bing as he became lost in his thoughts. He faintly smiled and said, "Everything is already finished. You also don't need to think about it too much. I think that with the honorable Ice Snow Goddess's Worshipper's strength, it wouldn't be so difficult for her to reclaim the stone. Okay, you can just stay here, read books, and wait for the President. I will go back first. Nian Bing, remember that as a mage, you can only raise your own strength by constantly meditating. I have already opened the first three prohibited floors in the library, but you shouldn't, in a million years, force your way into the fourth floor, if not, the

magic traps can easily claim your life.”

Li De left, and the great library was left with only one person, Nian Bing. Nian Bing was not impatient to find the stuff he needed. He stood at his original position, unceasingly contemplating, trying to sort out the thoughts in his brain. The appearance of the Ice Snow Goddess Worshipper threw his heart into great confusion. He could only think of doing one thing, that is leaving Ice and Snow City. ‘Since the Ice Snow Goddess worshipper already paid attention to this place, she might come again to visit. At that time, will I still be this lucky?’

Nian Bing was not scared; he was not scared of the Ice and Snow Goddess Worshipper. Even if it came to a direct engagement, he would dare to make a move at the Ice Snow Goddess Worshipper’s face. But he was a rational person. He knew that if he did something like that, he would just lose his life in vain. Therefore, he told himself, ‘I need to stay cool-headed. I can only achieve my dream by thinking rationality. Leaving this place seems to be the best decision for me, but right now, the True Sun Knife still hasn’t been completed. I cannot go, but in one month, in this one month, I hope that nothing happens.’

At this very moment, Nian Bing already decided that, from now on, he would carefully hide the Morning Dew Knife on his chest. He decided that before leaving Ice and Snow City, he would not use the knife, the Ice Snow Goddess’s Sigh, for this month.

After having thought through these things, Nian Bing’s emotional state improved a lot. Since the sealing of the city already ended, signaling the departure of the Ice and Snow Goddess

Worshipper, he only had to be careful and this month wouldn't be hard to cope with at all. Upon thinking this, his face exuded a thin, cold smile. On the first floor, he had found all the things he wanted.

When Nian Bing started to study magic, he was already wandering the continent with his father. His father had a deep and profound knowledge, but he was very young at the time and besides the important stuff, what he could remember was limited. He knew that what he needed most was theoretical knowledge. With a good foundation, he could improve his learning and become stronger in a shorter amount of time. Therefore, he was not worried about stepping onto the third floor and only started reading from the first floor. First he got a book called 《A Detailed Explanation of Magic Theory》.

Chapter 16.1 – The Fake Boyfriend Plan

Time passed quickly when reading. The library was covered with glass, attracting light from outside. Nian Bing leaned on the bookshelf, incessantly reading the things that interested him. Although the first floor had only the most basic mage knowledge, he felt as if he had discovered a treasure trove. One by one, he received the answers to the things that had occurred to his body that he previously did not understand. When Zha Ji was imparting his cooking skills to Nian Bing, he had already taught him that no matter what it is you're learning, the foundation is the most important. For this reason, when Nian Bing was learning cooking arts, he had a deep understanding.

As the sky became progressively darker, the magic lanterns turned on. They were powered by very low grade magic stones. Nian Bing did not have any intention to leave, so he started to read his fourth book of the day, relying on the moon as a light source.

Just then, the library doors suddenly made a sound. Although Nian Bing was immersed in reading, he was still on alert. He subconsciously raised his head towards the large doors to see that it wasn't the Mage Association President as he had imagined. Rather, it was someone he knew, the Ice Great Mage – Long Ling. She was the Mage Association's president's only daughter.

"It's you?" Nian Bing called out to Long Ling, looking at her with some astonishment and he smiled slightly. Long Ling, similarly, looked at him with surprise and said, "Why are you here? Considering your magic cultivation, you don't need to read the books on the first floor." While talking, she closed the door. She wore the same light blue Ice Magic gown and looked warmly at

Nian Bing. Her eyes smiled. When Nian Bing turned his gaze towards her, his eyes were very focused because he had just been reading a book. Along with his handsome appearance, this immediately made Long Ling's heart race a bit.

Nian Bing stood up and shook the《Ice Magic Foundation Theory》. He smiled slightly and said, "There's no way around it! My learning foundation was weak; studying the basics is very advantageous. Studying spells do not provide the same advantage."

Long Ling walked to Nian Bing's side. Her body emitted a faint, sweet scent that could not help but arouse Nian Bing's spirit. Long Ling's stature was not short, and compared to Xue Jing, she was only a little bit shorter. She raised her head to look at Nian Bing and said: "You are really eager to learn. I heard from Uncle Li De you haven't left here until now. It's already time to eat dinner now. Come on, let's eat together. Tomorrow you can come back and read again. There are many books here; they're not something you can finish in one or two days. You have time. Don't tell me that you're not hungry.?"

At the utterance of the word "hungry," Nian Bing felt a little hunger. After eating in the morning he had not eaten anything. Putting books back carefully to where he found them, he said, "Then let's go, Miss Long Ling. Has the President returned?" He probed a little with his question.

Long Ling shot him a glance saying, "Why are you always this polite? At the moment, you've already entered into the Association, and now we are all a family. Call me Ling'er. Miss, miss sounds very awkward. If we have an opportunity, I want you

to teach me your method to magic control. I've spent enough effort in my cultivation, but in terms of control, I'm very far off from you!"

Nian Bing had a good feeling about Long Ling. No matter the time, her words were always soft-spoken; listening to it was pleasant. "Okay, Ling'er, lead the way. It's very big here."

The two exited the library. Long Ling led Nian Bing towards the north. While walking she said to Nian Bing, "Father returned earlier, but it was only noon, and Lord Marquis and Uncle Xue drank a lot of alcohol. When father returned, he fell asleep as soon as he put down his head. He slept for a long time before waking. When he heard you had already come, he made me call for you. Liquor can really make a mess of things. Nian Bing, do you drink alcohol?"

Alcohol? Upon hearing this word, Nian Bing's heart felt a familiar feeling. Of course he drank; he even brewed wine. As a chef, anything with a relation to food or drink was imparted to him by the Demon Chef. "I drink a little, however, I normally do not drink much wine." In the Peach Blossom Forest, he always accompanied Zha Ji when he drank. Zha Ji's capacity for liquor was very good, therefore, under Zha Ji's authority, his own capacity for liquor was also trained until it was good. However, in order to make Nian Bing maintain his taste, Zha Ji drank only one or two months. Therefore, Nian Bing did not develop an alcohol addiction.

Long Ling smiled and said, "Drinking a little is okay. Alcohol isn't a good substance – drinking a lot can lead to a mess." Nian

Bing felt very relaxed with Long Ling. The two chatted a bit and then left for a pointy-tipped building not too far away. Long Ling brought Nian Bing to the second floor. “We generally eat our meals here. Besides me, father is meeting with Brother Shi Jiu and you. Other mages eat their meals in their own rooms. We will eat first, and then I’ll lead you to the resting place. Afterwards, whether it be that you wish to leave or to go out are all convenient options.

They entered into the left-hand room. Upon entering the door, Nian Bing saw Shi Jiu. Shi Jiu looked at Nian Bing and wrinkled his brows. In the seat of honour sat a person wearing a blue-green magic robe. He seemed to be forty to fifty years in appearance. The symbol on the chest of his mage robe made it easy to recognize that this person was the Ice Moon Empire’s Mage Association’s only Magister, as well as the Association President.

Nian Book looked at Long Zhi; Long Zhi simultaneously sized him up. Seeing Nian Bing’s handsome face and sensing his restrained aura, Long Zhi could not help but secretly nod his head. He was an expert in reading people. From just his appearance, he could tell that Nian Bing was stronger than his disciple. Although he was younger than his daughter, his breath was steady and unflustered. Additionally, he was the youngest Great Mage. Long Zhi could not stop his heart from swelling with good feeling.

Nian Bing walked to the front of the table and respectfully saluted Long Zhi, “Nian Bing meets the President.”

Long Zhi pointed at the seat next to him, saying, “Please sit. I welcome you to the association.” His speech was ordinary, but it gave Nian Bing a sense of pressure. At the time, Nian Bing’s mind

had already completely recovered from when he was reading. Although his visage appeared to be polite and modest, his heart was constantly on the alert. He tried to preserve as much of the tranquility as possible as he walked toward the seat on Long Zhi's side.

Long Ling did not sit down next to Shi Jiu and instead sat next to Nian Bing. She smiled slightly and said, "Father, I am hungry. Let us start eating." Dishes soon spread over the round table, and the aroma permeated the whole room.

Long Zhi smiled a little and said, "Everyone is present. Here, Nian Bing, eat a lot of food. In the future, when you don't have anything going on, you can come to eat with us." While talking, he took the lead and picked up his chopsticks.

Shi Jiu shot a glance at Nian Bing, his eyes letting out a sinister light. Even though it immediately passed, the ever alert Nian Bing still saw it. His heart moved, and subconsciously glanced at Long Ling. Although Nian Bing was clever, he could not understand Shi Jiu's intention.

Long Zhi did not eat much. He was focused on Nian Bing from beginning to end. When he saw him look at his daughter, he couldn't help but smile and say, "Nian Bing, you and Ling'er are both Ice Mages. If you have the opportunity, swap pointers with each other, so you can progress together. Where are you from? How long have you practiced magic?"

Nian Bing's came to, and he hastily put down his chopsticks. He said deferentially, "I am from the Harmonic Flower Empire, but I

left with my parents when I was young. I have practiced magic for about ten years. However, I did not have guidance from a teacher and could only cultivate by fumbling on my own, which you would mock.”

Long Zhi smiled indifferently, saying, “If by fumbling about, everyone could reach your level, then we old guys should just retire. Magic Scholar Li De is a man who does not ordinarily boast much, but he praised you greatly. Since you have already entered into the association, you do not need to restrain yourself. From now on, we are all a family. If you have a problem, you can ask any of the elders in the association to teach you, or you can come and ask me.”

Nian Bing looked at Long Zhi and thought that he is really worthy of being the Mage Association President because he was completely restrained. Compared to him, Shi Jiu was a small worm. “Thank you very much, President. Today, I stayed at the library for the afternoon. That place is a sea of magic. I think that even with just this amount of knowledge, it would take me a long time to learn. If there is anything I don’t understand, I will definitely ask you to teach me.”

Long Zhi pointed at the food on the table and said, “Do not worry about speaking, just eat more.”

His mind remaining alert, Nian Bing did not taste the flavors of the vegetable and meat dishes. Long Zhi asked only dull questions, but Nian Bing was very alert-if he were to answer wrongly, he would immediately be in big trouble. Shi Jiu and Long Ling shot glances at Nian Bing from time to time. Long Ling’s glances were

very curious, while Shi Jiu's glances were filled with jealousy and resentment.

“Nian Bing, where were you during the few days of the sealing of the city?” Long Zhi asked a crucial question.

Chapter 16.2 – The Fake Boyfriend Plan

Secretly, in his mind, Nian Bing said, ‘You obviously received this news from Li De. You’re just asking me because you don’t trust me.’ “ I came from a small place and haven’t seen much of the world, as you already know. And so, during these days when they sealed the city, I didn’t know what was happening. I have a friend who lives in the city who runs a metal shop. I stayed there for a couple of days.”

“Metal shop? I know most of the big weaponry shops in the city. Which one was it?” Long Zhi continued to question him. A little sharpness slipped from his speech.

Nian Bing smiled a bit and said, “You definitely won’t be familiar with it. It’s a very small metalware shop called Shui Huo Metal Shop. Usually, there are very few customers. The industry’s competition is very intense; it’s not a good life.”

“Shui Huo Metal Shop?” Long Ling smiled and could not help but giggle. Laughing in spite of herself, she said, “With this name, how could his business be good? You should advise him to change it.”

Nian Bing echoed, “That’s right! I also told her that, but she is very stubborn. No matter what I said, she would not change it. I also don’t know what to do. I’m also not very close to her, so it’s not good to say too much.”

Long Zhi put down his chopsticks. He smiled slightly then said, “Okay, you guys eat. This noon, I drank a little. Additionally,

dealing with the sealing of the city for these few days was tiring, so I will first go rest. Ling'er, Shi Jiu, take good care of Nian Bing. He's already been assigned his lodgings, so bring him there. Nian Bing, the association will not restrict your freedom, but I want you to stay here for a few days to pay special attention to your cultivation."

Nian Bing hastily nodded his head in response. He stood, watching Long Zhi leave. He knew that he had already temporarily passed a test, but Long Zhi would most definitely dispatch a person to investigate Shui Huo Metal Shop. Feng Nu was smart; there should be no way she would slip up in her speech. His mind relaxed a bit after thinking this. Finally, he was in the mood to eat. The flavor of the vegetable and meat dishes were very plain, but to a hungry Nian Bing, they were satisfactory.

Shi Jiu finally opened his mouth for the first time. "Nian Bing, what are you planning to do from now on? Do you want to stay at the Association to cultivate, or do you want to go out and learn from experience?" Shi Jui emphasized the words "learning from experience" very strongly.

Nian Bing filled his mouth with food and replied very vaguely, "I still have not put much thought into it. However, I definitely will stay at the library for some more days. Afterwards, ask me again."

Shi Jiu spoke with loathing, "How low class. Don't tell me you didn't know that eating while talking with people is rude?"

Nian Bing knew that he was deliberately attacking himself, but he also did not mind it. He chewed the food stuffed in his mouth

and swallowed it down, saying, “I’m really sorry. I came from a small place, so I don’t understand much about etiquette. From now on, please let me ask Big Brother Shi Jiu for more teaching.” His face adopted an expression as if he was in reverence of his majesty. In his heart, he secretly sneered. It was too easy to handle Shi Jiu’s nasty character.

Long Ling said, “Senior brother, don’t blame Nian Bing. From now on, we will teach him these things. Nian Bing, eat a little more. It seems your ordinary days were filled with hardship.”

In this weird atmosphere, the meal was finally finished. Shi Jiu mocked and ridiculed Nian Bing from time to time, and Long Ling would continuously help Nian Bing , causing Shi Jiu’s fires of jealousy to burn even more vigorously, and Nian Bing attacked like one without cares. He gorged himself with food, eating without a trace of politeness to fill his stomach.

“Big Brother Shi Jiu, Ling’er, I’ve finished eating. You see.....” Nian Bing looked at Shi Jiu with a guileless expression.

Long Ling stood up, saying, “Let’s go. I will lead the way. Right now, the association’s meals are becoming worse and worse. Nian Bing, on another day, I will bring you to the Pure Wind House to eat. The food there is very delicious.

Shi Jiu also stood up, a little intoxicated. He looked at Long Ling and said, “Junior sister, you go back and rest. I will take Nian Bing.”

Long Ling did not persist. Smiling slightly, she said, “I will trouble you then, Senior brother. Nian Bing is new. If there is something he doesn’t understand, teach him.”

Shi Jiu looked at Nian Bing deeply. Shi Jiu gave Long Ling a small smile and said, “Relax junior sister; I will. Nian Bing, let’s go.”

Nian Bing bid farewell to Long Ling and left the dining hall with Shi Jiu. On the road, Shi Jiu did not speak a word. He led Nian Bing to the mage lodgings. As a dormitory, the living area’s spire was not too big. Upon entering the corridor, Nian Bing began his careful observation. Here, there were about 50 rooms, just as Magic Scholar Li De had said. Only people who have cultivated to Great Mage could be assigned to live here.

Shi Jiu led Nian Bing directly to the corridor’s important place. Shi Jiu pulled out a silver key and opened the door, then turned to look at Nian Bing and said, “Here it is.”

Nian Bing measured the room as soon as he entered it.. It was divided into two rooms. The outer room was approximately 20 square meters, and one three-person sofa and two single-person sofas were placed there. The room appeared very fresh and clean. The floor was made of wood planks – walking on them produced a soft sound. At the entrance to the outer room was a 6 or 7 square meter bathroom which included the materials used for washing. There were more than 10 square meters and had a wide, large bed that looked very comfortable. The magic lanterns in the room let out a soft yellow light. It really was a room suited to cozy living.

Shi Jiu closed the door, walked to the sofa, and sat down. “There is a twenty-four hour hot water supply here, so you can wash whenever you want to. Eating is done at the dining hall outside. Furthermore, at the right side of the entrance, is a big canteen that serves as the public dining room. Of course, you can also call underlings to bring you food to your room to eat. If you need something, press the magic button on the wall.” While talking, he gestured at the red button on the side wall.

Nian Bing said in his mind, ‘As expected, it is worthy of being in the Mage Association. All of the facilities are made for establishing foundations. My current Great Mage treatment is really not bad.’

Shi Jiu pointed at the sofa at the side and said to Nian Bing, “Sit. I have some things I want to say to you.”

Nian Bing, of course, knew what he wanted to say, but he kept a blank look on his face. He sat on the sofa next to Shi Jiu. Shi Jiu did not look at him and blankly said, “Nian Bing, after entering the Association, your status has already changed, but you are still a newbie after all. The best choice is for you to focus all of your energy on magic cultivation. Don’t think about other things. You especially should not get close to the people you shouldn’t get close to. I have already lived here for 20 years, so I’m much more familiar with things here compared to you. This is a piece of advice you best listen to, so no problems occur.

Nian Bing secretly smiled in his heart, but his mouth said, “Big Brother Shi Jiu, I don’t understand what you mean. Right, I still have not thanked you for introducing me into the Association. If it had not been for your and Miss Ling’er’s help, I’m afraid that the

Association wouldn't be as easy to enter."

Shi Jiu leaned on the back of the sofa and boasted shamelessly, "You know, in the association, though I may not be a Magic Scholar, I have a position close to that of a Magic Scholar. As for Ling'er, Master has high hopes for her. She is putting majority of her energies into cultivation. If everything's all right, you should not go find her too often, do you understand? Ling'er and I grew up together since childhood. From now on, she will inevitably be my wife. I don't want many men approaching her." Seeing Nian Bing looking dull, Shi Jiu finally could not help but speak his truth.

Nian Bing suddenly said, "So it was like this. Only such a talented and good-looking guy like Big Brother Shi Jiu could suit Miss Ling'er. This younger brother congratulates you."

Shi Jiu's eyes exuded a happy expression. Any previous displeasure at Nian Bing's words had suddenly vanished like smoke in thin air, "You really think so?"

Nian Bing answered heartfully, "When I first saw Shi Jiu Big Brother and Miss Ling'er, I immediately felt that you were a pair made in heaven and arranged by earth. Big Brother, don't you worry. I only regard Miss Ling'er as a friend. And what with my petty and low origins, I could not have too many ideas."

Hearing Nian Bing clarify like this, Shi Jiu was suddenly joyous. With a slight smile, he said, "Brother, since you've already entered the association, you do not need to mention your status again. With your looks, after this, you will definitely find a good

companion.” He could not be more satisfied with Nian Bing’s tact. Immediately his name had changed to brother. His mood was that good.

Nian Bing smiled a little and said, “Afterwards, this little brother will rely more on Big Brother’s help. You should definitely give pointers to little brother. If, from now on, Big Brother has a problem, don’t hesitate to open your mouth. Anything that Little Brother can do will be done without shirking his burden.”

Chapter 16.3 – The Fake Boyfriend Plan

Shi Jiu got up and said, “Good, in the future, if there is anything you are not clear about in the Association, you can come to me. From the color in the sky, it’s getting late. As your Elder Brother, I will not disturb your rest. From now on, we are like brothers. I’m going first then.” Shi Jiu handed over the key in his hand to Nian Bing as he selfishly calculated in his mind. He knew that Nian Bing’s magic level excelled compared to his. Since he didn’t have the heart of Long Ling, it was much better for him to become fellow brothers in the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association as there would be more benefits in the future.

Nian Bing stood up, and saw Shi Jiu off to the doorway. He said with a smile, “Big Brother, you also rest early. You don’t need to bother with this little brother.”

Suddenly, Shi Jiu had a mysterious smile and softly said, “I heard Teacher Li De say that you are very interested with the library’s resources. Let me tell you that the first three floors only have a few common magic resources, that’s all. Only the fourth floor contains our Association’s secrets. Only that place has extraordinary and terrible magic restrictions that even the Magic Scholars in the Association are unable to enter inside.”

Nian Bing’s heart stirred. He asked, “Big Brother, to tell me such things, could it be that you have a method to go inside?”

Shi Jiu told him the words he planned in advance, “Didn’t I tell you just a moment ago that I have a special status in the Association? I have followed Master since I was a child, and I have

grew up in the Association. There was one time when Ling'er and Master entered the fourth floor. Considering the fact that I am Master's disciple, if there comes an opportunity, maybe I can bring you along... but this is a secret and you cannot talk about it. Inside the room there are all kinds of exceptionally complex records, and they are unusually hard to comprehend. In reality, entering there isn't too big of a deal. Ling'er and my current meditation methods came from there. Our cultivation progress is many times faster than that of an average person. From now on, we are family. Big brother definitely won't forget about you in the future if I gain any benefits from that place." As he finished speaking, Shi Jiu mysteriously smiled at Nian Bing before he turned around and left.

As he walked away, Nian Bing also smiled. 'Is this a way to bribe me?' Looks like this Shi Jiu was thinking of forming a clique for his personal interest. In the future, as long as he was tempted by a benefit, there would be no secret left about the fourth floor of the library. It was unknown what kind of special magic records would be there. As he thought about it, Nian Bing's heart couldn't help, but burn with passion. In the case that he could learn a powerful magic, revenge against the Ice God's Pagoda would no longer be just a dream. Walking to his room, Nian Bing carefully took out his Morning Dew Knife from the pocket at his chest and hid it under his mattress. Looking around at his surroundings, his hand held his new magic wand, Icicle Rod, as he went out of his room. He first needed to return to Pure Wind House. Leaving for such a long time, he hoped Uncle Li would not suspect him. He hoped his luck would not be too bad, and Ming Yuan would not decide to go out and try to find him, which could be troublesome for him.

Thinking about the probability of it happening, Nian Bing hastily and quietly departed from the Mage Association. After confirming that no one was following him, he took off his magic gown. He

bought a piece of square cloth on the street and wrapped his gown and his magic wand in it. Afterwards, he returned to Pure Wind House at mach speed.

As he was about to reach the back door, he saw a slender red figure. His whole body immediately froze. “Mi-Miss... Why are you here?” This time, he wasn’t faking his shock.

Xue Jing turned back and looked at Nian Bing with a sour expression. “You are very late! I heard from Uncle Li that you went out at noon, and only now, have you returned. You didn’t even tell me about it and went out to play around.”

Nian Bing forced out a smile and said, “Miss, you can see I’m a poor young man. How can I go and play around with girls? Are you going to go to the back garden to practice sword dances today?”

Xue Jing groaned and replied, “Just to let you know, you better not dare to go outside to play with girls. If you want to do so, you will need money, and with your ability I don’t think you have the resources for that. Today I went to find you several times, but you were unexpectedly missing. I specially came here to wait for you and wanted to see when you would finally come back. Since you didn’t return too late, I will forgive you this time. However, next time, you better pay attention to this matter.”

Nian Bing pointed at the bundle containing his magic gown and magic wand and said, “Miss, I only went to buy some clothes that’s all. It’s my first time coming to such a big city, so I went to buy some thick clothes. My luck is not bad; I came across a sale. They were two coppers coins each, quite worth it. Do you want to look at

it?”

Xue Jing said with a certain revulsion, “Look at what? It’s only some lousy clothes.”

In Nian Bing’s mind, he let out a sigh of relief and said to himself, ‘Using this method to escape this kind of situation is clearly useful.’ The reason why he justified the presence of the clothed bundle was because Xue Jing’s gaze was on it earlier.

Xue Jing saw that Nian Bing was taciturn and didn’t speak. The look in her eyes became a little gentler as she continued, “Your face seems to be pretty good; it healed quite quickly. It seems like your cheek is thick enough.”

Nian Bing touched his face, if it wasn’t for the rank 1 healing spell, he feared that even one week would not be enough to heal. ‘If she was hitting herself, would she say that her own face was thick? Ah~! A woman indeed...’

Xue Jing continued speaking, “Nian Bing, right now, I have a matter that I want to ask you for your help. I don’t know if you are willing to help me.”

Nian Bing stared blankly and asked, “Miss, I’m only a normal woodcutter servant. How can I help you?”

Xue Jing snorted and replied, “You don’t need to think too much about it. You only need to say if you’re helping or not.”

Could Nian Bing refuse? He still didn't plan to leave Pure Wind House right now, so he had no other alternative but to nod his head. "It's my honor to be able to help Miss."

Xue Jing's eyes were shining. She was originally beautiful, but that glint in her eyes increased her charm. It was like her eyes were saying, 'It seems you know what's good for you in this case.' "Good! Then, we agree on it. I want you to lend me your face to use."

Nian Bing jumped in fright. "Miss, my..."

Xue Jing said with disdain, "Look at your appearance, where's your manly spirit? What are you afraid of? As if I would eat you." As she finished saying the words, her charming face flushed red. Her voice lowered a bit and she continued, "Remember what you said last time at the pavilion? I want you to help me out with something related to that matter."

Nian Bing's eyebrows slightly creased as he asked, "You said to me that you like someone, right? How can I help you with that?"

Xue Jing snorted and replied, "Anyway, you already promised. If this matter works out, I will ask Uncle Ming Yuan to teach you lots of things, maybe even recruit you. I'll definitely make things easier for you in the future."

Nian Bing sighed. "Miss, then first tell me about what you want to make me do."

Xue Jing walked until she was next to Nian Bing and said in a low voice, “I want to let you be my boyfriend.”

Smelling the sweet scent of a young maiden emitting from Xue Jing’s body, coupled with suddenly having heard the soft tone of her whispers, Nian Bing couldn’t help feeling like he was high in the clouds. With difficulty, he pulled back his attention and said, “Miss, I’m afraid it won’t do. You, you are the Miss, and I’m only a servant...”

Xue Jing raised her hand and hit Nian Bing’s shoulder with slight displeasure. “Let me finish talking, all right? You really are like a toad who wants to eat swan’s meat. You believe I will really let you be my boyfriend?! I only want you to help me probe that person and find out if he had any feelings for me in the end. Tomorrow evening, I want you to follow me to attend a banquet. Your looks aren’t too bad, so that’s the reason why I asked you to lend me your face earlier. When that person comes, I can show off how affectionate we are. If he has me inside his heart, feelings of jealousy and hate will certainly arise. Then, then...”

Nian Bing’s heart went cold for no reason. ‘A toad who wants to eat swan’s meat, huh? Xue Jing, ah, Xue Jing! You also greatly underestimate me. It seems like you are this kind of girl that I don’t necessarily look up to. These words of yours, I will remember them. Inevitably, one day, I can return them back to you.’ Because of the misfortune in his childhood, it made Nian Bing inevitably extreme. He coldly glanced at Xue Jing who, at this instant, had her head lowered and was thinking about her beautiful future.

“But Miss, even if I’m going, I’m afraid that it will be inappropriate with my low status.” Nian Bing deliberately repeated the two words “low status” a few times,.

Xue Jing didn’t hear Nian Bing’s change of tone and impatiently said, “I have my own plan. Since I let you follow me, naturally, I won’t let you lose face, since that will also make me lose face. For this kind of high-class banquet in Ice Snow City, not just anyone can participate. Perhaps, in your lifetime, you can only hear about it, but never be able to go. You should be grateful to me instead of shirking. Tomorrow, I will give you a magic gown and let you disguise yourself as a mage. As for the other things, I can easily arrange it. You just don’t need to take care of it. Tomorrow, you don’t need to work. I will go find you early on and teach you some basic etiquette. During the banquet, you don’t need to do anything. You only need follow me, that will be enough. Do you understand?”

Nian Bing’s heart turned cold as he nodded his head and replied, “That’s good! I will do my best to make sure you are satisfied.”

Xue Jing faintly smiled and said, “You can rest assured, I will certainly keep my word. I only want you to do things properly. After this is over, I will naturally fulfill my promise. As such, go to bed early so you will be in good condition tomorrow.” As she finished speaking, her red silhouette swiftly jumped and with a few flickerings in the air, disappeared in the blink of an eye.

Nian Bing coldly looked at the direction Xue Jing had flew off in as he talked to himself, “You helped me out once, so I will not

argue with you. However, this will be the last time. No one can insult me and not pay the price for it.” Suddenly, his mind stirred as he thought of something. He slapped his forehead. “Ah! How did I forget that appointment. It looks like I still need to return to the Mage Association for a moment. I must keep that appointment as I don’t know what kind of tricks that Ice Magic Scholar can do.”

Chapter 17.1 – The Mage Association’s Probe

He recovered all of his things from the firewood room where he was staying, and exited from the back door. On the street, a faint wind brushed by, blowing a fresh yet ice-cold wind. Nian Bing’s mind was comfortable. As he looked at the bustling crowds on the street filled with illuminating lanterns, he was suddenly overcome with a feeling of loss. Upon entering the Mage Association, he had encountered many things. Although he had not slipped-up for now, he still wondered, should he continue to stay in Ice Snow City? ‘Yes, I must definitely remain. Even if the cooking techniques of the Pure Wind House couldn’t hold my interest, the Mage Association library and the True Sun Knife that Feng Nu was making were both necessary to me. One month. I will leave in one month at the latest. Xue Jing, you may be in for a surprise. I only wanted to make you realize that you shouldn’t look down on everyone. I cannot retaliate, but at least I can give that unruly temperament of yours a lesson.’

When Nian Bing returned to the Mage Association, the night had already grown deep. Before entering the Association, he once again changed into his magic gown, which bore the emblem of a Great Mage on his chest. Once he had shown the badge on his chest, the night watch did not block him at all. Nian Bing did not immediately seek out the Ice Magic Scholar. Rather, he first returned to his own room and took a look at the Morning Dew Knife that was underneath the mattress. He hid the other stuff he had brought in a hidden location. Opening the door once again, he first surveyed the area. The passageway was absolutely free of any people. At this time, he left his room and walked out, closing the door with his back hand and headed in the westernmost direction.

As he walked, Nian Bing quelled his spirit force, and rotated his

internal fire and ice magic source whirlpool to have the ice on the outside, fire on the inside. By doing so, he concealed his fire magic nature, one of his greatest secrets.

From the vantage point of the entrance, the westernmost room did not appear to have anything particular about it. It was actually similar to his own residence. After raising his hand to knock several times, he said, “Hello, I am Nian Bing.”

The door opened soundlessly. An old and muffled voice came from inside, saying, “Enter.”

Upon just crossing the threshold, Nian Bing abruptly felt something icy hit him in the face. Subconsciously, he lifted up the Icicle Rod in his hand and, in a flash, casted a rank 2 Ice Curtain spell to block his front.

The room suddenly lit up. This was also an entrance hall, only a lot bigger than his own. Atop the sofa sat the Ice Magic Scholar who calmly watched him. With a praising nod, he said, “Not bad; your reaction was very fast. No wonder Li De thought so highly of you. As a Magic Scholar, however, that alone is not enough to protect yourself. If the enemy had been a martial arts expert, and had mounted a sudden attack, you would have been entirely defenseless. Such low grade magic really is useless.”

Nian Bing stared blankly for a moment, then nodded his head and said, “Many thanks for giving me pointers, senior.”

The Ice Magic Scholar pointed to the couch by his side, and said,

“Sit, I called you here. I have a few things I want to tell you. As for listening or not it depends on you.”

Nian Bing sat down on the sofa, and assumed an appearance of trust. In front of a Magic Scholar, even if he were to have his defenses up, it would be of no use. Besides, he firmly believed that this Ice Magic Scholar, at least for now, did not have any harmful intentions towards him.

A light flashed; suddenly many transparent gems were in the Ice Magic Scholar's hand. The stones sparkled with a rainbow-colored ray of light. Before Nian Bing could respond, he clearly felt an extremely strong magic power enshrouding his body. The strange thing was, this magic power did not have an aggressive nature.

The light vanished, and the transparent stones twinkling with rainbow light reverted to its undisturbed state. The Ice Magic Scholar seemed to let out a breath of relief and said indifferently, “My name is Bing Jing, but from now on you can call me Teacher Bing Jing. Nian Bing, since you cultivate Ice magic, why did you enter the Association rather than the Ice God Pagoda? As a mage, I think you should know that the Ice God Pagoda is the most desired place for Ice Magic Scholars. Only there can you learn the most profound Ice magic. Having said this, there is no point in me saying more.”

Nian Bing's heart tremored violently. Doing his utmost to maintain an indifferent tone, he said, “Frankly speaking, Teacher Bing Jing, I don't like places like the Ice God Pagoda. I feel that their restrictions are too strong. I don't know why, but the Ice Snow Pagoda always gave me an overbearing feeling. I would

rather just cultivate undisturbed; I definitely do not want to get caught up in any struggles, and I also do not want to become a tool of the Ice God Pagoda. So...”

Bing Jing abruptly got to his feet, his eyes flashing a cold light. “Nian Bing, do you know who you are talking to? I’m telling you honestly that I am a Worshipper of the Ice God Pagoda. Right now, I am giving you a chance to decide. Leave here, head north, and join the Ice God Pagoda. With my introduction, I think that you will definitely get placed in an important position.”

Nian Bing secretly smiled coldly in his heart. He similarly stood up, and said with such devotion to righteousness that it inspired reverence with a wrinkle in his brows, “Sorry, Teacher Bing Jing. Since I have already entered the Association, I am already a part of the Association. Though the Ice God’s Pagoda may be fine and dandy, it isn’t somewhere that I want to go. Please excuse me. If there isn’t anything else, I will go.” Having said this, he turned his body to walk out the door.

Bing Jing’s whole body let out a cold light and the room’s temperature decreased drastically. In the midst of a frost mist, he said indifferently, “Are you not scared that I will kill you?”

Nian Bing turned his body, looking at Bing Jing by the barest sliver. “Teacher Bing Jing, I think you wouldn’t dare. This is the Mage Association, not your Ice God’s Pagoda. I really don’t understand. The Ice God’s Pagoda and the Mage Association are both pillars of the Ice Moon Empire. Why would they hate each other? No matter what it is, I will not join the Ice God’s Pagoda.” Having said these words, his eyes could not help but emit a

resolute chilliness. This was not feigned. The hatred he had for the Ice God's Pagoda was buried deep in the recesses of his heart, but from time to time it unintentionally arose.

The chilling atmosphere coming from Bing Jing's person vanished. He smiled, and at the same time, the doors of the interior room opened. Out came two people: Association President Long Zhi and Ice Magic Scholar Li De.

Bing Jing smiled slightly and said, "President, you can relax this time. This child is neither someone wanted by the Ice God's Pagoda or someone who would betray the association when it suits him."

Long Zhi, satisfied, nodded his head. Looking at Nian Bing's doubtful face, he said, "Child, it was our bad this time. You are a new addition to the Association, and we needed to probe you. Right now, you have already been verified. I hope you can understand. Don't worry, you have been loyal to the Association. The Association will not mistreat you. Okay, you can go now."

After blankly saluting the three people, Nian Bing left the room. Long Zhi turned his head to Li De, who was right next to him. "What do you think?"

A small smile crossed Li De's face as he said, "I still think as I told you earlier. This child seems to have no deeper machinations and wholeheartedly wants to study. In the future, he will inevitably become a powerful mage."

Long Zhi softly sighed and said, "From what we've seen now, he

seems to be truly as such. He is either really inexperienced or his scheming runs so deep that even I cannot see what he is truly thinking in his heart.”

Bing Jing took out the transparent stones that twinkled with the rainbow-colored light and passed them to Long Zhi. “President, I see that you’re thinking too much. Even if he was profoundly scheming, this is not necessarily disadvantageous for us. As long as he is not someone being sought after by the Ice God’s Pagoda, and is not that so-called Magic Reaper, we can just investigate him more later. Oh, that’s right, it seems that that child Shi Jiu had just previously stayed in his room for a moment. Afterwards, Nian Bing also left. I don’t know what he was doing. I originally wanted to assign people to follow him, but I was also afraid of him finding out. He went out for about an hour.”

Long Zhi helplessly said, “Whatever he was doing does not matter. I reckon it was to return to his hotel to retrieve his baggage. However, in this time, there is no point in obviously waiting right? We were not able to fully vet him, but at least we verified a part of him. Actually, he was at the library this afternoon studying all kinds of basic level materials. I have already stopped doubting him. I saw him through the window when I was returning from the Pure Wind House. He looked resolutely devoted. That definitely could not be faked. Shi Jiu’s natural instincts are not bad, and his innate talent is also pretty good, his only misgiving is that he thinks himself as infallible. If I were to guess correctly, he sought out Nian Bing because of Ling’er. Having said that, from now on, I would rather hand over my daughter to Nian Bing; I have no desire for Ling’er to wed him. No matter how many schemes Nian Bing has, he is much stronger than Xiao Jiu.”

Chapter 17.2 – The Mage Association’s Probe

Li De laughed out loud and said, “The matters of those kids is not something we need to meddle in. Let them grow. President, you’re also tired from today. Let us return early to rest.”

Once Nian Bing got out of Bing Jing’s room, he immediately felt his whole body was drenched in cold sweat. The seven colored precious stones were obviously a useful type of a probing magic item. Fortunately, he didn’t carry the Morning Dew Knife with him. His every action from before had all been a ruse. Bing Jing was unable to deceive him because he had already seen all twelve Worshipers when he was in the Ice God’s Pagoda. How would he forget about them when their appearances had been deeply engraved into his mind. He was lucky in a way since he was able to escape the last probing of the Mage Association.

He returned to his room and retrieved the Morning Dew knife, putting it near his chest. He took off his magic gown and placed it on his bed alongside his Icicle rod. Once again, he left the Mage Association. Perhaps tonight would be his last night at the Pure Wind House. Tomorrow would be a brand new beginning, his debut at the Mage Association.

Early morning, as the first light of the sun rose from the east, Nian Bing had already awoken from his meditation. The few books on the foundation of magic weren’t read in vain. It caused his understanding of magic to deepen as he cultivated diligently throughout the night. Unfortunately, there was no progress on the theory underlying the source of his fire and ice magic. However, his magic control was better. Right now, what he needed the most was to upgrade his magic power. In fact, he needed to use his spirit

force and blend it together with the magic power of the source of his fire and ice magic. It would bring out an enormous power. Nian Bing firmly believed that when he is able to combine fire and ice together, the magic power brought forth wouldn't be as simple as one plus one equals two. On the continent, he should be the first fire and ice dual mage. If so, why not create a type of magic that only belonged to him?

When he walked out of his room, Uncle Li hadn't awaken yet. Nian Bing looked at the area occupied by the Pure Wind House and couldn't help but sigh. 'It looks like there are no more cooking skills left to pursue here.' Top-notch cooking skills, second-rate magic, that was what described the current him. Perhaps, right now, the Mage Association was more suitable for him. At least, he would have more useful things to learn.

While he thought about it, Nian Bing walked to the firewood house. He picked up the firewood blade and, with lightning fast speed, he chopped down the firewood. Although it only needed to be hacked into eight pieces, he was so concentrate with his thoughts that, out of habit, he gradually chopped the firewood into more and more pieces. Nian Bing always believe he could handle his own matters alone. He knew that what he had started, he had to finish. Although he had already decided to leave, he still had to do his work properly on this last day of work. The firewood blade lifted above him appeared alive to the point the image of the blade almost couldn't be seen. Nian Bing only needed to use his left hand to cut the firewood's sides and it was naturally chopped into eight pieces.

Uncle Li walked out from his room and was facing Nian Bing's back who was cutting firewood at that time. He couldn't help but

slightly smile as he thought, 'This young man is truly diligent. It's just dawn, but he's already busy working.' As he walked next to Nian Bing and saw the firewood blade's afterimages, Uncle Li couldn't help but be dumbfounded. The work quota for one day had already been 70% done by Nian Bing.

Nian Bing knew that Uncle Li was next to him. However, he didn't stop what he was doing. While he was chopping firewood, he calmly said, "Uncle Li, chopping firewood is not just a task. If you concentrate while doing it, you can acquire unexpected results. Firewood is an inanimate object, but people are alive. What do you think?"

Uncle Li looked at Nian Bing. He was in a daze and rendered speechless. It was the first time he felt that this youngster in front of him wasn't simple at all, at least, compared to what he had imagined, Nian Bing was more mysterious.

"This is the final piece. Uncle Li, I'm leaving you this as a commemoration." His hand suddenly seemed more nimble. The blade in his hand gently waved and the tree bark quietly peeled off. The sawdust danced on the blade light. Words were carved under the blade as if it was alive. The block of wood gradually changed shape under Nian Bing hands. Finally, as the last blades of light flashed, the firewood no longer looked like a piece of wood. It was now carved into a person.

Uncle Li was shocked to find that the wooden figure was him with one hand holding a log and the other hand raising his firewood blade as if he was ready to chop firewood. The sculpture was vivid and lifelike it seemed like the actual person.

Nian Bing put the blade and the sculpture into Uncle Li's hands and then he slightly bowed. "Uncle Li, many thanks to you for taking care of me these past few days. I give you this as a souvenir and I hope you will remember me."

Uncle Li held the still warm statue. He barely start thinking about what to say when he heard a sharp and clear voice close-by, "Nian Bing, you're up, aren't you? Let's go immediately. We are very tight in time."

Nian Bing faintly smiled. He brushed off the sawdust on his body and replied, "Miss, I have been awake for a long while. Let us go then." He gazed at Uncle Li with a profound look and walked toward Xue Jing who showed up to meet him.

Exceptionally, today, Xue Jing didn't wear her favorite red clothes. She was dressed in a white cheongsam which made her a lot more charming. "Let's go! You're going with me to this place." She blatantly pulled Nian Bing by his sleeve to the inner part of the Pure Wind House. Uncle Li watched their backs as they left. Once again, he looked at the sculpture in his hand. He softly sighed and talked to himself, "It looks like, later, I still need to finish chopping wood by myself!"

Xue Jing directly lead Nian Bing to a courtyard. Immediately after Nian Bing entered the courtyard, he smelled a fresh and clean smell. The courtyard was not very big, measuring around 300 to 400 square meters, with a small stone path leading deeper inside the courtyard. Looking around, the whole courtyard was completely covered in green and especially large trees. The large

trees were towering over them. The leaves and branches formed something like a big green parasol shrouding over half of the courtyard. He followed along the stone path toward a wooden house that seemed to have two or three rooms. Although the house was made of wood, it seemed very sturdy. In the center of the courtyard lawn, there was a pool around ten square meters with water so clear it was possible to see the bottom. Just at that moment, a red goldfish the size of his palm swam by in the pool, unable to say it was content with leisure.

Xue Jing proudly turned toward Nian Bing and said, “What do you think? My place is pretty good, huh? I’m the only one living here. Besides Big Sister Ling’er, you are the first outsider to come here. Let’s go. I have things to give you so you can be ready. These are things Ling’er lent to me with great difficulty. You need to be careful with it. By all means you must not ruin them and make me unable to explain it to Ling’er.”

Nian Bing followed Xue Jing into the wooden house. Inside, contrary to what he had imagined, the decorations were quite plain. A light pink brought an elegance that made it seemed completely fresh and clean. Xue Jing took a magic gown on the couch and gave it to Nian Bing. The magic gown was red in color with the Ice Moon Empire insignia on the lapel of the gown. A flame encompassed by two silver circles was embroidered on the chest. Compared to his gown yesterday, this flame had one less circle around it. This should be the symbol for Advanced Mage. Nian Bing couldn’t help finding it funny since he was already a Great Mage. Right now, he had to pretend to be an Advanced Mage. He felt somewhat strange about it.

Xue Jing handed over the gown to Nian Bing and said, “First, try

on these clothes. Let's see if it fits. I think it should fit more or less. You will participate in the banquet as an Advanced Mage. In addition with your age, no one should belittle you. What do you think? I think I was very thoughtful.”

Nian Bing looked at Xue Jing and said with a smile, “Are you going to watch me change my clothes here?”

Xue Jing's charming face became red and she replied, “Who would want to watch you? Just hurry up and change.” Although she said those words, she still walked out of the room.

Nian Bing took off his outer clothings and put on the red magic gown. The faint flame aura on it made him feel very comfortable. The clothes also fit him.

“Are you done?” Xue Jing was yelling impatiently from outside the door.

“I'm done.” Nian Bing tidied his clothes then looked at the door. Xue Jing opened the door and entered. As soon as she entered, the first thing she saw was Nian Bing wearing the fire magic gown. She couldn't refrain from being completely astonished. The red gown was contrasting with his long golden hair as if they were flame, making the blue of his eyes appeared even deeper. It especially highlighted his proud temperament. That sight made her heart beat faster.

Nian Bing felt somewhat uneasy from Xue Jing burning gaze. “Miss, is there something inappropriate?”

Chapter 17.3 – The Mage Association’s Probe

Xue Jing startled out of her stupor and cursed to herself, ‘How could this be, is he really that good looking? He’s only an embroidered pillow, that’s all. Xue Jing, Xue Jing, don’t be confused by his appearance. This kind of man is not worthy of arousing your goodwill.’ Breathing deeply, She strolled to Nian Bing’s side and carefully looked at him, saying, “Not bad, it fits really well. This is just wearing good clothes and imitating people, right. Just keep up the appearance of having a hint of arrogance. Come time for the party, without my indication, you are not to speak as you please. It is only okay when you are with me.”

Nian Bing nodded and said, “Miss, the party starts tonight. What should I do now?”

Xue Jing said, “There are many things you should do. First, I will teach you some party etiquette. Oh, that’s right, can you dance?”

In his mind Nian Bing said, ‘Jump five? Is there also a jump six?’¹ Shaking his head, he said, “I cannot.”

Xue Jing said, “Okay. This is something that takes a long time to learn. I hope you can learn quickly because it’ll be very useful tonight. We will start right now; I will first teach you etiquette.”

Half an hour later, Xue Jing’s astonished voice emitted from the wooden house. “Nian Bing, have you never learned etiquette before? You know how to do everything. You seem to do it even better than I.”

“No, I haven’t! I just copied whatever you did, that’s all.” Did he really not know? Of course not. From when he was young, he learned these things from his father’s teachings. His father always said that these are needed quite a bit for occasions of social interaction. Right now, with Xue Jing, he was actually recalling these scenes from his childhood, so he was able to perform very naturally and fluently.

Xue Jing looked at Nian Bing with misgivings. She said, “Fine! It seems that your power of comprehension is really high. There’s no use to continue studying etiquette. We will start learning how to dance. If you can also learn to dance this quick, I will take you to eat something good this afternoon.”

Right at this time, a clear, sonorous voice came from the outside. “Jing’er, the clothes that you wanted were made.”

Xue Jing jumped out in fright. “Shit, my father came. Nian Bing, you go hide first. Don’t you dare let my father see you.”

Nian Bing said blankly, “But, the room is only this big, where can I hide?”

The voice from outside sounded again. “You girl, you didn’t even close the gate to the courtyard. You’re already this big but still this careless. In the future, who would dare to marry you.” This time, the voice was much closer to the wooden house.

Xue Jing looked everywhere anxiously. Suddenly, her eyes lit up.

She hastily pulled Nian Bing to the front of the bed and pushed him onto the bed. There was no time for them to hide even his shoes. She hurriedly pulled the two curtains shut, just as the door to the room opened.

Xue Jing frantically turned outwards. “Father, why did you come here personally?”

Reclining on top of the soft bed and smelling the faint scent, Nian Bing’s heart could not help but stir. All he heard was that clear, sonorous voice say, “This girl, recently, you’ve been going out every day and going crazy. Having not seen you, Father missed you. Your mother passed earlier, so your father is your only relative. Don’t tell me that your own father cannot go see his daughter?”

Xue Jing’s mood had already returned to normal. Acting like a spoiled child, she said, “Father is the best. That’s why I have definitely been accompanying you recently. Oh, that’s right. Are you going to the party tonight?”

“Me? Of course I’m not going. That’s a party for you young folk. You should learn from that Ling’er. You see how she’s so warm and lovable. With you being so deranged like this, who would dare approach you. If, in the future, you do not get married, your dad will bear no responsibility.”

Xue Jing said, displeased, “Father, how can you say these things to your own daughter? Your daughter is this beautiful. There are many people pursuing me; it’s only that I don’t recognize them.”

The clear and sonorous voice carried a joking smile. “Is that so? How come I heard that, right now, all the noble sons in the city who see you all run away, scared of you?”

Xue Jing snorted and said, “That’s because they are all useless. Even if I were to marry in the future, I would marry a man who would be able to support both heaven and earth. Even if I hadn’t done anything, they didn’t have any qualifications.”

The clear voice could only helplessly say, “But the last time I introduced you to some young men, every one had strength that was not weak. How come you also didn’t want them?”

“Of course I wouldn’t want them. Those guys, each of their eyes were looking at the top of the head. Moreover, they looked too ugly. So brutish and hulkish, how could they suit me?”

“There’s nothing I can do about that. Still, if you find anyone one yourself, whatever you wish, Dad will unconditionally support you. That will always be.”

Xue Jing giggled happily. She said, “You don’t need to deal with that. Anyway, I am eighteen years old. Don’t worry. These two days, you should just relax. I will first return so I can change clothes and see if they fit me.”

Lying on the bed and hearing Xue Jing’s father-daughter banter, Nian Bing’s heart was speechless with envy. Just a while before, he himself also had a similarly caring father! But right now...his

thoughts, upon reaching here, his body subconsciously moved, emitting an extremely soft sound.

“A person? Jing’er, is there someone lying on your bed?” The clear, sonorous voice suddenly turned cold.

Xue Jing evidently became very nervous. “Father, it’s nothing, it’s just a servant girl.”

“A servant girl? I want to see just what this servant girl looks like.” The curtains were parted furiously. Nian Bing lifted his head to look and saw a thirty to forty aged handsome and white-clad middle-aged man standing erect at the bedside. From his cold, unfeeling expression came a sense of the fact that he could rip you to shreds at anytime.

Calmly sitting up on the bed, Nian Bing stood up. He could really understand what the middle-aged man was feeling. Seeing a strange man in his daughter’s bed, it would rattle anyone’s mood, no matter who.

The middle-aged man turned his head to look at Xue Jing. He said coldly, “So this is who you called a servant girl?” Originally, he had been genuinely angry, but when he really saw Nian Bing’s appearance, his heart’s anger dimmed a little. The person on the bed had a handsome mien, and moreover, even upon seeing him suddenly, he did not bear a trace of a panicked expression. Adding to that, the symbol on the fire magic gown was of an Advanced Mage. This was already enough verification for him to suit his daughter. His daughter had already grown up after all. Having friends of the opposite sex was nothing. Although he was lying on

the bed, his clothing was tidy. Obviously, it was because he had appeared suddenly that it was like this.

Xue Jing looked sheepishly at her father, but turned her head to glower at Nian Bing. She said, “Dad, h-he is only a friend. Right now you came suddenly, and I was afraid you would misunderstand so.....”

The middle-aged man let out a laugh. “Misunderstand? I, Xue Ji, could go as far as to misunderstand his daughter? You doing this, on the contrary is making you more suspicious because you tried to cover it up. Foolish girl, I don’t know when you came to know this fire mage. Introduce him to your father.”

Xue Jing, just as she was to open her mouth, Nian Bing spoke. “Hello, my name is Nian Bing. Actually, I am not a fire mage. I borrowed these clothes from Miss. I am only a firewood cutter servant employed by the Pure Wind House.” Since Xue Jing already looked down on him, why would he let his father misunderstand anything?

Xue Ji’s eyebrows wrinkled, and he said, “Chopping firewood? I did not hear wrongly. Jing’er, I need you to explain.” Although his voice was as indifferent as before, from his body came an air of imposing grandeur that Nian Bing could clearly recognize. This owner of the Pure Wind House was certainly a not weak martial artist. At the very least, he was a Great Swordmaster. The difference between him and Xue Jing, based only on the imposing air seems to certainly be not just a single level.

Xue Jing cast a vehement look at Nian Bing. “There’s no part for

you to say here, get out.”

Nian Bing did not utter a word. Looking at Xue Jing equally, he took great strides out of the room.

Xue Jing turned to face her father. In a low voice she mumbled, “Father, you know, I’ve never had a boyfriend. Nian Bing has not been working long here at our home as a firewood chopper personnel. Tonight, at the party, all of my other female friends will have their own male companions. Only I did not have one. Nian Bing’s looks are passable, so I thought of making him impersonate. I borrowed a magic gown from Ling’er. As a matter of fact, I was just teaching him etiquette.”

“Making trouble, this really is making trouble. Only you would think of this kind of plan. Don’t tell me that you thought this was fair to other people? Others come here to work, not for you to play with.” Xue Ji was scolding his daughter, but his face had already been already part smiling. In his mind, he secretly thought, ‘This kind of mischievous plan, only my daughter could’ve thought of it.’

Xue Jing saw that her father wasn’t really angry. Suddenly, she pulled her father’s arm and happily laughed, saying, “What’s not fair, helping me do this kind of thing, compared to hacking firewood is so much easier.”

Xue Ji’s brows creased slightly as he said, “You cannot say this kind of thing. Every person has the authority over their own life. You as a girl must pay attention to this. I saw that young man as not bad, comparatively unflustered. Is he really a firewood

cutter?”

Xue Jing said, “Of course that’s true. He is someone I recruited to enter here. That day, he was thinking of going to the Grand Pavilion, and as a result encountered that powerful, vile Liao San person. If I had not rescued him, he would’ve maybe been beaten up violently in a flash. Although his looks aren’t bad, I don’t like such embroidered pillows. Father, relax, there’s no way something will happen.”

Xue Ji smiled bitterly. “You, girl, if you really could make me relax that would be great. Okay, I will go now. You can figure it out. Pay heed to propriety. You are a girl after all, you must pay attention to custom in order to avoid being laughed at by others. If you stay here with me, I’m afraid my heart disease might act up.”

Notes:

[1\]](#) The pin yin for dancing is tiao wu. Jump five’s pin yin is also tiao wu. He’s making a pun.

Chapter 18.1 – Birthday Banquet

Xue Jing stuck out her tongue and personally sent her father to the gate. When they went out, they only saw Nian Bing standing on the stone paved path. His sight was resting on a big tree, his face not showing the thoughts running through his head.

Xue Ji walked until he was next to Nian Bing and said with a smile, “Young man, do a good job at Pure Wind House. Although my daughter acts willfully and makes a scene sometimes, she has a good nature. The matter before was just a misunderstanding. I already forgot about it. Do you have your hands full helping her?”

Nian Bing slightly wrinkled his brows. Xue Ji was the Pure Wind House’s owner. He came to him to talk, but to his surprise, he didn’t use a commanding tone. It was more like he was beseeching him. At this point, it was enough to show his elegance. Nian Bing’s good impression of him couldn’t help but increase. He respectfully said, “Owner, you’re welcome, but this is what I should do. ”

Xue Ji looked deeply at Nian Bing. Suddenly, his wrist flipped and thrust toward Nian Bing’s shoulder. Nian Bing stood motionless. Xue Ji patted his shoulder and said, “Good! I’m going now. You should continue to follow her and learn.” As he finished speaking, he turned around and left in big strides. Nian Bing continued watching him until he was out of sight. Earlier, Xue Ji’s eyes revealed a glint of suspicions and decided to test Nian Bing. Xue Ji already found out that in Nian Bing’s body did not contain even a single shred of dou qi. From the beginning, Xue Ji felt this youngster wasn’t as simple as he might seem, but he was unable to pinpoint the problem. As he walked out of the courtyard and passed the courtyard gate, he threw the thought from his mind.

With Xue Ji gone, Nian Bing's sight turned back to Xue Jing. He saw Xue Jing who was patting her towering chest, "It really scares me to death. Fortunately, father was merely puzzled by your appearance. You're an idiot. Earlier, who allowed you to tell my father about this? You won't die if you talk less! I nearly died. Anyway, let's continued learning. This time we can do it openly without fear."

Once again, Nian Bing returned to Xue Jing's room. This time, he didn't need to learn etiquette. They directly started learning how to dance.

After two hours.

"Nian... Bing..." When Nian Bing managed to stepped on Xue Jing's feet for the 14th times, that was her last straw. "I want to choke you to death! How can you be this stupid! I taught you so many times, but you still didn't get it."

While Nian Bing evaded Xue Jing, he replied like he felt he was wronged, "I'm just clumsy. You know it might not be too late. Miss, right now, it's still morning. You should switch for someone else, there's still time."

"Switch for someone else? Switching your head! The clothes I borrowed were according to your size. Where will I find someone now? I'm going out for a bit. I will return quickly. Wait here for a moment." She glared at Nian Bing ferociously before she ran out of the room. Looking at her hurried back, Nian Bing's brows

wrinkled. “This girl, if she had half of her father’s self-restraint, she would be considered as one of the top beauties. What a pity!”

It didn’t took long before Xue Jing returned. On her face, there was the trace of a strange smile. Unexpectedly, a clanking sound could be heard from her feet. “This time, it will be okay. You can step on me as you wish. As long as you continue stepping on me, you are not allowed to rest. You will keep practicing.”

Nian Bing stared warily and was shocked to find that Xue Jing was wearing a new pair of shoes, metal shoes. He opened wide his eyes and said, “Miss, you don’t need to be this excessive. Aren’t they heavy?”

Xue Jing snorted and replied, “Of course they are heavy! However, compared to you stepping on my feet, this is much better. These are the metal shoes I wore for five years and were specially made to train and forge the body. Each shoe weighs 7.5 kilograms. Right now, I’m lending you these shoes which weigh 14 kilograms each for dancing practice. You better take this seriously, you hear me?”

Just now, Nian Bing heard Xue Jing say that if he didn’t do well, he wouldn’t be allowed to rest. Ever since he agreed to the plan, he was already taking it seriously. Although holding a beautiful woman’s hand felt pretty good, as it stood, there was no such thing as ‘easy’ ever since he became a mage. He helplessly nodded and proceed with his dancing lessons.

The two of them continuously practiced without any rest. Nian Bing started to grasp the dancing steps with great difficulty.

Although he was unable to tell if his movements were graceful, his ability to go on stage was passable. Both of them even ate lunch inside the room. Regardless of the time, Nian Bing was still wearing Xue Jing's 14 kilograms shoes. At this moment, his brow was already beaded with sweat.

Xue Jing wiped the sweat on her forehead while she was sitting on her bed. "Finally, you can be considered to barely meet the standard. So be it! Let's continue practicing. If you can persevere, I will accompany you to the end. Nian Bing, you should rest a bit and drink some water first. Later, you should go wash up first and change into clean underwear. After that, we will prepare ourselves before going. This time, I'm finally going to see if I am in his heart."

Nian Bing watched Xue Jing's dedicated appearance. Something strange suddenly arose in his heart. At this moment, Xue Jing seemed to be the most beautiful when she boldly pursued whatever she wanted. This caused Nian Bing to admire her greatly. "Miss, if he isn't jealous, what should we do?"

Xue Jing unhappily said, "Shut you crow's beak, saying such inauspicious remarks. This young lady is beautiful and moving, how can he not be aroused? If... if by chance he really is not jealous, then, you will have to explain yourself."

Nian Bing innocently asked, "I am not him. What does that have anything to do with me?"

Xue Jing waved her hands in worry and said, "I just said it randomly. Anyway, human matters can be left to fate. If God

hasn't bound our fate together, what other methods do I have? Ling'er has it good. Since she was a child, she had her elder apprentice brother beside her, spoiling her and cherishing her. She also doesn't need to feel vexed about love. I'm depressing myself to death right now. Nian Bing, if only you truly are a mage, it would be so much better!"

Nian Bing glanced at Xue Jing. "If I am a mage, how will that be good?"

Xue Jing happily laughed and replied, "If it is like that, you will be able to pursue me! The status of mage is said to be above mine. Even if you are an Intermediate Mage, it doesn't matter. Honestly speaking, I saw so many men, but you are the most beautiful one so far. If you were to wear women clothes, maybe, you might turn into a beautiful woman as beautiful as Ling'er and me?"

Nian Bing got goosebumps from hearing her. He bitterly smiled and said, "Miss, to use the word beautiful to describe a man seems very inappropriate. At present, we have to go take a bath because I can barely stand myself."

Xue Jing's charming face blushed as she said, "Speak more clearly, what are you shouting about going to take a bath for. Let's go. Fortunately, we learned to dance before I let you change into the mage gown. Otherwise, it would be dirty and that would certainly be troublesome. Do you know that this kind of gown is very valuable?"

Nian Bing thought, 'I know. In your heart, I'm still not even worth a mage gown. It seems like in this society, without strength,

you have nothing. If I was a mere commoner, perhaps, I might have to endure your insults. Unfortunately, I am not. Xue Jing, I will remember every single one of those words you said to me. You are such a crafty, unruly, and willful Miss High-and-Mighty, who would like you?’

As the curtain of the night gradually descended, a luxurious carriage was traveling on Ice Snow City’s main street. The carriage was pulled by four black and tall horses. The carriage was very big and more than ten people could sit inside without a problem. It was driven by an old man in a very strange way, his wrist would shake slightly and the reins inside his hands would automatically whip the horses’ backs in order to guide them. The control of the speed was quite adequate, neither too fast, nor too slow, while carrying them toward the west side of Ice Snow City.

Inside the carriage, Xue Jing was extremely uncomfortable and kept looking at her silver cheongsam. That dress wasn’t the same kind of dress she usually wore. It was specially made for the banquet. It had around three to four layers of clothes that needed the help of at least three servants girls to help with the dressing. Even with that, it took Xue Jing at least an hour before she was done. For her who always liked wearing practical clothes, it was simply torture.

“Nian Bing, are my clothes beautiful?” Xue Jing unconsciously asked Nian Bing who was sitting opposite to her.

Nian Bing faintly smiled and sincerely said, “Very beautiful. Miss’s long brown hair on the silver cheongsam made you look very noble compared to your usual dress.”

Xue Jing's eyes brightened as she said, "Really? If it's really beautiful, then it was worth it for me to have hurried them. These clothes are really tight! They are killing me! Fortunately, I'm not very fat. I don't know how much of a crime it is for those fat married women wearing these kind of clothes. Still, you have it easy. No matter the event, it's suitable for you to wear a mage gown."

Nian Bing faintly smiled and replied, "In any case, I'm only pretending. Miss, if you feel it's not comfortable, can't you just wear a normal dress? Don't tell me that you're not confident about your beauty?"

Xue Jing snorted and said, "How am I not confident? It's just that, today, I have to probe that troublesome guy's feelings. If it were not for him, even ghosts would not want to wear this kind of dress. In the higher society of Ice Snow City, I am well-known as a free woman. Ah! That's right, from here on, you must not call me Miss. If you call me that before the end of the banquet, I'll become a huge joke."

Chapter 18.2 – Birthday Banquet

Nian Bing said neutrally, “Then what should I call you?”

Xue Jing thought for a moment before saying, “Since you are portraying the position of my boyfriend, then you should call me Jing’er like my father does. I’ll let you off this time. Also, you should remember that at the party, when you speak to me, do not be so deferential. We must definitely appear somewhat affectionate. Doing that would add a feeling of veracity. We cannot be found out by other people, do you understand?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “I understand, Jing’er. So it’s like this.” While talking, he turned his body around and sat down next to Xue Jing. One hand wrapped around her slender waist, making her lean against his chest.

Xue Jing was distracted at first, but almost immediately, she clearly sniffed Nian Bing’s masculine scent. She raised her head to look at his distinctly angular and handsome face. In that moment, she actually did not feel that their current position was very much questionable.

Nian Bing embraced Xue Jing, his eyes exuding a faint cold light. ‘Since you forced me to be your boyfriend, I will not be polite.’

After quite a while, Xue Jing sobered up. Struggling, she said, “Release me, can’t you see that we still have not arrived at the banquet yet?” Although she spoke these words with her mouth, her struggle was very light. She was, of course, overcome with a

cozy feeling from Nian Bing's warm embrace.

Nian Bing smiled slightly, saying, "We haven't arrived at the party yet, but I feel that it is good for us to cultivate the mood. If it is too stiff, any bright-eyed person could see through it, right? Since we are putting on a act, naturally, we would want to create a feeling of authenticity."

Xue Jing was at a bit of a loss, and when she looked at this handsome man again, she said, "When did you become so smart? In my impression, you should've been dim-witted!"

Nian Bing's blue eyes exuded a crystal clear light. "That was only what you assumed, but I am not an idiot. I never said I was stupid! Isn't that so?"

Xue Jing suddenly felt a trace of wrongness, but she couldn't say why. Letting out a snort, she said, "You must remember, you are only acting as my boyfriend for the night. That is all. If you have any presumptuous ideas, I cannot be blamed for being impolite to you."

Nian Bing gave a little smile and said, "I wouldn't dare to have any presumptuous thoughts. You are the Miss, and I am a servant. Naturally, after tonight, our positions will return to what they are. Each of us will return to our respective domains. Isn't that so? Jing'er."

Xue Jing saw that Nian Bing was wearing a strange expression, but did not know why. Her mind was somewhat disturbed. At this

time, the carriage came to a stop. They had arrived at their destination.

Xue Jing swatted Nian Bing's hands. From beneath where she sat, she pulled out a box and passed it over to Nian Bing.

Nian Bing asked, puzzled, "What is this?"

Xue Jing replied, "You'll know once you open it."

The box was red and had considerable weight. Opening the box, Nian Bing immediately felt an essence of fire element hit him in the face. It was actually a Fire Magic wand. The rod was dark red in color and had spiraling veins on the surface. A round, red gem sat on the tip of the wand. The quality was not bad; the fire element flavor was very rich. It was at the same level as his own Icicle Rod.

Xue Jing said, "I am also lending this to you. It is called the Fire Star Wand. You must be careful, fire mages all want this wand."

Nian Bing pulled out the wand and nodded his head, saying, "I will not break it. Even if I sold myself, I wouldn't be able to afford it."

Xue Jing stared blankly for a moment and tried to think of something to say, but no words came out.

The coach curtains were lifted. According to propriety, Nian Bing

dismounted first and then offered out his right arm to Xue Jing in the carriage. Xue Jing used him as support to descend from the carriage. The elderly coachman hurriedly moved the carriage to the side and said, “Miss, I will await you at the entrance.”

Nian Bing raised his head to look out , and all he could see was a fantastically dazzling palace-like construction. Although he was only outside of the gates, he could still feel the magnificent grandeur of the courtyard. It was a very large courtyard. It was surrounded not by walls, but by a iron-wrought fence. The fence was approximately three metres high and covered in sharp tips. Obviously, these were used to prevent anyone from climbing over. Outside of the huge gates, which approached five metres in height, were ten soldiers guarding each of the two gates. Each soldier was equipped with a standard issue cavalry spear. The formidable looking soldiers standing guard exuded a threatening aura. Obviously, it they weren't just any ordinary guards.

Nian Bing remembered Xue Jing's explanation that the owner of the house was the Minister of Finance in Ice Snow City. He possessed great authority, only second to the city owner, the Lord Marquis. He personally carried the title of count. Today's party was held because it was his daughter's eighteenth birthday. The count's daughter, Long Ling, and Xue Jing were very good friends.

Xue Jing pulled on Nian Bing's arm, saying, “Speak carefully, and remember everything I taught you, am I clear?” Her hand was very cold. Even separated by two layers of clothing, Nian Bing still clearly felt that Xue Jing was evidently nervous right now.

At this time, Nian Bing relaxed a lot. His facial expression was

extremely natural. Together with Xue Jing, he slowly strolled to the big gates.

At the entrance stood a butler who was taking all the invitations of guests entering the courtyard. Upon seeing Xue Jing, he could not help but laugh. “Miss Xue has arrived; our family’s Miss has been awaiting you. Long Ling is estimated to arrive quickly. This time, our Ice Snow City’s three great beauties will finally be together again.”

Xue Jing smiled lightly. “Uncle Li, you are making fun of Xue’er. What are these Ice Snow City three great beauties! That is only sycophantic nonsense. If we are speaking truthfully, Ling’er and Rou’er are the beauties, while what am I regarded as?”

The butler smiled lightly and his gaze fell on Nian Bing. Nian Bing clearly saw that from this butler’s eyes flashed a cold lightning. If his frame of mind had not been sufficiently determined, it would’ve only take this one gaze to frighten him away. Towards the butler he nodded his head and said, “Hello, I am the fire mage, Nian Bing.”

The butler smiled lightly and said, “No need to be polite, sir. Having achieved the realm of an Advanced Mage at such an age makes you really a promising youngster! Since you are a friend of Miss Xue, naturally, you are our respected guest. You two, please enter.” He did not ask any further. From Nian Bing’s unhurried and composed expression, he had already felt Nian Bing’s true strength.

Xue Jing did not feel that anything was amiss. Xue Jing grabbing

onto Nian Bing's arm, they finally entered the courtyard.

The courtyard was enormous. Right in the front of the ginormous, palace-like building was an gigantic magic fountain that would spout a ten meter high column of water. In the vicinity of the fountain, a bouquet of every color formed a crowd. The whole courtyard was covered with greenery. The trees alone, numbering in the dozens, were obviously a product of the owner's request for the location's environment to be sufficiently tall.

Xue Jing seemed to have let out a breath and in a low voice, said to Nian Bing, "We have passed what is considered the first hurdle. You didn't know but Uncle Li, who was guarding the door, actually grew up with the Lord Marquis, despite only holding the position of a butler. His martial arts level is extremely high and is held in deep regard by the Lord Marquis. Every time there is a party, it always him who is assigned responsibility for examining the guests. Up until now, no one can sneak in while under his eyes. My father already spoke with me about this. Uncle Li might have the strength of a Martial Master.

Nian Bing said secretly in his mind, 'These kinds of noble families are really different, as expected. A mere butler already has this such valiant strength. It seems that I should be even more careful; I definitely do not want to let the cat out of the bag.' While thinking this, he subconsciously stroked the Morning Dew Knife in his chest, his most reliable item.

They walked from the front of the door to the giant building, and immediately, two servants came out to greet them, inviting the two to enter.

A somewhat peculiar voice suddenly rang out. “Is this not Xue Jing? Ah! You have really undergone great changes today! I didn’t think that you would actually be this pretty in full, formal dress.” These words were spoken by a married woman. Her stature was not tall; she was shorter than Xue Jing by over half a head. Though she may have been beautiful in the past, the years had elapsed. In the corner of her eyes, crow’s feet had already appeared. She was heavily made up. Seeing her made Nian Bing nearly throw up.

The beautiful woman believed in taking beautiful strides to walk in front of Xue Jing. Xue Jing could not help but wrinkle her brow. “So it is Madam Mei Ya. I didn’t think you would come today.”

Lady Mei Ya laughed, saying, “Of course I would come. Today is the Lord Count’s daughter’s birthday. How could I not come? Xue Jing, hurry, we will go in to talk. My, who is this handsome mage! Have we not met before?”

Chapter 18.3 – Birthday Banquet

Xue Jing snorted coldly, saying, “This is my boyfriend, Nian Bing, an Advanced Fire Mage. He has just returned from his travels; of course you haven’t seen him. Pardon us, Lady Mei Ya, we must go in first; Rou’er is waiting for me.” Having said this, she pulled Nian Bing quickly inside, not paying anymore heed to Lady Mei Ya.

Lady Mei Ya’s eyes fell to Nian Bing’s face without looking away. Her eyes held a bewitched look, and her lips hummed. She said something to Nian Bing in a low voice. Nian Bing did not dare listen. He immediately lowered his head and followed Xue Jing into the hall. It was best to stay away from this sort of vile old lady.

“Jing’er, who was that person? I felt she was very strange!” Nian Bing could not help but ask Xue Jing.

“Strange? What do you mean by ‘strange’? She was a social butterfly in her youth and, with great difficulty, climbed the social ladder by marrying a viscount. After the marriage, it was discovered that the viscount’s family clan had already declined earlier on. The family circumstances were worsening. In a few years, the viscount fell ill and passed away. She, however, had no intentions of leaving and started her social butterfly activities again. She has continued doing so for the past few decades up to today. Did you not see how much makeup there was on her face? It’s to conceal all of her facial wrinkles. Her real age is maybe past fifty years. Seeing her really makes people feel disgusted.”

Nian Bing smiled slightly, leaned towards Xue Jing’s ear and

whispered, “I agree.”

The hot breath on Xue Jing’s ear could not help but tickle her. She subconsciously withdrew her neck and wanted to interrogate Nian Bing, but thinking of where they were right now, she could only glare at him and swallow down her words. Nian Bing appeared to have not noticed her actions. With a small smile, he straightened his back and looked around. The surroundings were pretty fine. The entire grand hall was over a thousand square metres in size, and already, the number of guests had reached a hundred. They stood chatting in small groups. Seeing each of them all dressed up, they obviously seemed very wealthy. The entire large hall was brimming with the scent of cosmetics.

“Nian Bing, go wait at the side for a few moments. You can indulge yourself with food. If someone tries to start a conversation with you, you best not answer. Just seem as if you’re very haughty, and it’ll be fine. I’m going to go and find Rou’er. It is her birthday, after all.” While saying this, she pointed Nian Bing to an open couch on the side. Then she followed a staircase upstairs.

Nian Bing walked to the side of the sofa and sat down. He casually picked up a drink and slowly sipped. He was not fond of social gatherings like these. He simply observed these people peacefully, that’s all. . He placed the Fire Star Wand in his hand on top of the table. He did not care too much about this kind of gold grade item.

Right at this time, he suddenly heard the door guard yell, “Mage Association’s Miss Long Ling and Master Shi Jiu.”

They came earlier than he had expected. He could not help but be a tad bit nervous right now. He hastily grabbed the wand on the table, stood up and walked to a dim corner on the opposite side to stand in. Today, Long Ling did not wear a magic robe. Rather, she wore a purple formal dress. She was extremely well-suited to formal wear. It set off her refined and warm character greatly. She was like a purple fairy when she entered the main hall. Long Ling was obviously much more popular than Xue Jing. When Xue Jing had entered, a plurality of people only looked at her and continued talking among themselves. Only a few number of people took the initiative to call out to her. This was not so for Long Ling. When she was past the door, she became the focus of the entire hall. Almost everyone came to greet her. It felt like she was the lady of this place.

Smiling lightly, Nian Bing eyes emitted a faint radiance. He knew that under these circumstances, there was no way that Long Ling could discover him. He was also happy to keep quiet. Today, he saw that these so-called upper class nobles' party all had the same routines.

Shi Jiu still wore a magic gown. The symbol of his position was not displayed, but among everyone here, there was none who doubted his strength. Although Shi Jiu was not as handsome as Nian Bing, it can also be said that in a moment, these two people became the focus of the entire event.

Right then, Nian Bing discovered a strange guy with the same bearing as him. Only the two of them did not go up to greet Long Ling and Shi Jiu, so it was easy for each of them to find the other party. It was a young man with a stature comparable to Nian Bing's. Only, he was clearly a little more robust than Nian Bing. He

wore well-fitting white, starched clothing. He looked as resolute as a cutting knife. Though it could not be said that he was handsome, he gave off a feeling of intense manliness. A pair of black eyes paired off with black hair and an appearance of callousness. In his hands was a knife. The knife was very short. Nian Bing felt that it was not longer than his own Morning Dew Knife. The scabbard was also white. As someone who could bring a knife with him to this event, it was obvious that this man's position was not ordinary. Suddenly, Nian Bing's mind raised a thought. Could this person be the cool guy Xue Jing likes?

Soon, Nian Bing was certain of the possibility of this thought. In this main hall, he was the only person who matched who Xue Jing's description at that time. Then a strange thing happened to Nian Bing; that man had actually started to walk over to him. Although he did not walk fast, the hall became very small, and in almost a few strides he was in front of Nian Bing.

“Hello, my name is Yan Feng.”

Nian Bing blanked for a moment. According to Xue Jing's description, he should've been an extremely cold person that neither beast nor man could come close! Why could he take the initiative to greet him? Though he was saying these things in his mind, outwardly he did not forget his manners. Extending a hand to shake, he said, “Hello, I am Nian Bing.”

Releasing his hand, Yan Feng walked over to stand at Nian Bing's side. Lifting his little finger, he very naturally brushed aside a lock of black hair hanging in front of on his forehead and tucked it behind his ear. His eyes were like excessively black hole filled with

an indescribable lustre. He calmly fixed his gaze on Nian Bing. After a good while, the sides of his lips were filled with a peaceful, smiling expression. “It seems I haven’t seen you before.”

Seeing the tall and stern Yan Feng, a strange feeling appeared in Nian Bing’s heart. Although he could not clearly identify what the feeling was, he faintly felt it was a bit improper. “I arrived in Ice Snow City not long ago, and I just joined the Mage Association. That’s why you have not seen me before. It would seem that you often participate in these sort of social activities.”

Yan Feng’s gaze was still resting on Nian Bing’s face. He said indifferently, “It isn’t often, just occasionally. I loathe these housefly-like women.”

In his mind, Nian Bing secretly thought, ‘There is seriously something wrong with this guy’s brain for him to act so ruthlessly!’ Smiling lightly at Yan Feng, he nodded his head. He did not say anything more and Yan Feng also did not open his mouth. Instead, he turned his gaze to the event area.

With great difficulty, Long Ling struggled free of the numerous people crowded around here. She said a few words to Shi Jiu and ran upstairs. Clearly she was joining up with Xue Jing and this Miss Rou’er. With Long Ling’s departure, the atmosphere of the hall calmed down. The nobles continues their conversation as before. The nobles were largely very young, of course, with the exception of Lady Mei Ya.

The cool Yan Feng spoke again, “Lord Count has appeared.” Nian Bing followed his gaze out, and could see an elder of about fifty

years. He was clad in splendid garments. He was not tall, and his width seemed to be equal to his height, making him resemble a large meatball. The fat on his whole body trembled as he descended the stairs. The stairs were exceptionally sturdy. Despite his great weight, they still did not make a sound. Nian Bing thought, 'As expected, there is no doubt that this is the Minister of Finance of Ice Snow City. His stomach was not stuffed with only a few delicious meals.'

At the count's appearance, everyone talking suddenly fell silent. Their eyes fell on the staircase. The count had descended halfway down the stairs and stopped. His obese, gigantic face was covered in a smiling expression. "Welcome everyone to my humble abode! Today is my daughter's eighteenth birthday and coming of age celebration. Everyone, do not hesitate to eat or drink. Play happily and treat my home as yours. If there is anything you find unsatisfactory, please forgive me. Everyone continued chatting. I'm sure my daughter will arrive very soon." After these words were said, it elicited cheers and flatteries. The fat gathered more and tightly surrounded the count's face. He seemed satisfied with this situation and slowly went down the stairs. With a cup of wine in one hand, he mingled with the young nobles, chatting.

Seeing this spectacle, Nian Bing and Yan Feng's displayed identical expressions. Their eyebrows were creased together and were filled with disdain. The extravagant lifestyles of the rich was most certainly something they did not like.

"Brother Yan, how much do you know about this Lord Count?" Nian Bing asked subconsciously. He was not familiar with the people here, and right now, the only one who could answer his questions was Yan Feng.

Chapter 19.1 – The Wise Luo Rou

Yan Feng coldly said, “The Count’s name is Luo Hao. Honestly speaking, he holds quite a bit of power as he controls Ice Snow City’s finances. Every year, the tax money he transferred to the Ice Moon Empire’s higher ups was never less than the other cities in the empire. This Count who manages the biggest territory only has one daughter, Luo Rou. Although she’s eighteen this year, she already became famous 10 years ago. At that time, she was only eight years old, and she participated in the Ice Moon Empire’s national literary exam, which happened once every three years. Unexpectedly, she was the top scorer of the exam. Furthermore, there was a large gap between her and the second top scorer. She is a genius that improves constantly with time. Her intelligence is something that’s continuously displayed. I heard that one of the reasons why all of the Count’s financial budget can be this clear and orderly may have been linked to his daughter’s intelligence. Among Ice Snow City’s top three beauties, considering her age, she may be the youngest, but she is also the wisest. The three of them are known as the Wise Girl, Luo Rou; Magical Girl, Long Ling; And, last but not least, Mad Girl, Xue Jing. Even the city’s owner, Lord Marquis, has yielded to them to some extent.

“Mad Girl? Haha! It’s really not in name only, but it is also in reality. According to her temperament, that nickname completely fits her.” When he heard the three girls’ nicknames, Nian Bing couldn’t help but find it funny in his heart.

Yan Feng’s sight stayed on Nian Bing, “What? You also know Xue Jing?”

Nian Bing nodded and said, “Today, I’m just her companion. So,

of course I know her. I don't know what Big Brother Yan thinks of her."

There was amazement displayed inside Yan Feng's eyes. "I didn't expect that you would be Xue Jing's companion. What do I think of her? I only know that her father, Xue Ji, and one of the three Great Marshals of the Ice Moon Empire, the Devourer of Blood and Exterminator of Soul, Xue Po, are blood-related brothers. That Xue Po, as the head of the three Great Marshals of the empire, cultivated the Iron Blood Way. As long as they send him out to fight a war, the enemy would all be killed without a single survivor. So, him being the Iron Blood commander-in-chief is justified. Xue Ji, compared to his older brother, is more low-keyed. He only opened a restaurant called Pure Wind House in Ice Snow City. With his brother's prestige, no one would dare to offend him."

Finally, Nian Bing was able to learn the Xue family's background. Inwardly, he couldn't help but gloomily sigh. 'To be able to open a big restaurant in the center of the city, he's indeed not simple, Ah!'

At that instant, a gasp of surprise could be heard. Everyone's sight all turned toward the staircases. Coincidentally, they all shouted together two words, "Wise Girl, Wise Girl, Wise Girl..."

On the staircase, leading the way was Xue Jing and Long Ling, two woman, one silver, the other purple. Each of them wearing a tight-fitted evening gown that highlighted their well-endowed figure. As they stood there, it appeared that Xue Jing was a bit more developed. The many years of training in martial arts had tempered her body and made her brim with health and vivacity.

Although Long Ling was more slender, her smiling expression was gentle and easily made people have a good impression of her.

The majority of the gentlemen present were all staring at the two women, but that didn't include Nian Bing and Yan Feng. Right at that moment, a blue figure appeared between Long Ling and Xue Jing. She possessed blue long hair that was slightly curly and didn't seem to be style as they wafted behind her back. Inside her large blue eyes, there emitted a faint light. There was no need to look at her appearance as the look in her eyes was enough to deeply attract Nian Bing. Those eyes were full of wisdom and were as deep and clear as the water in the Yougushentan where the bottom couldn't be seen. As for her appearance, among the women Nian Bing had seen, only Feng Nu could be compared to her. However, this Miss Luo Rou appeared excessively fragile and her appearance contained a trace of an ephemeral beauty.

Nian Bing smiled. "No wonder Big Brother Yan said that the respectable Count's only daughter is very precious. Looking at that Wise Girl, I'm really somewhat suspicious about her being the respectable Count's real daughter."

Yang Feng looked at Nian Bing. His face displayed a rare light smile. "I don't really know anything about this, but you shouldn't let the respectable Count hear these words by any means. Otherwise, he will be livid."

Both of them looked at each other and laughed. Imperceptibly, the distance between them had greatly shrunk. At that time, the Count was already welcoming people at the bottom of the staircase. The Xue Jing and Long Ling escorted the Wise Girl Luo

Rou down the stairs. As she came arrived at the bottom, she stopped and faintly smiled. Then, she slowly bowed to everyone. “Today is my birthday. Many thanks for everyone attending tonight. I can’t help but feel extremely honored by your presence.”

The melodious birthday’s song echoed, giving the inside of the hall a harmonious atmosphere. A cart pushed by two servants slowly arrived. On the cart, there was an excessively immense cake composed of seven layers. On the cake, there were 18 blue candles that had already been lit. As the cake appeared, the light of the grand hall was extinguished. Only the candle light on the cake flickered in the dark. Apart from Nian Bing and Yan Feng, all the other guests were loudly singing the birthday song. Luo Rou was smiling warmly. Her hands were clasped in front of her chest as she closed her eyes to make a wish. After a short moment, her eyes opened and there was a trace of a smile on the corner of her mouth. “Jing Jing, Ling’er! Come blow the candles with me.”

At the same time, the three beauties blew out the 18 candles’ light. Once again, the light in the hall returned. The birthday’s ceremony had come to an end. Luo Rou took a knife and made the first cut in the cake. The knife sliced the first layer of the cake and, when it was pulled out, the knife came out covered in cream. Luo Rou said with a smile, “To the many guest present, my body is not too well. I don’t know if it’s possible to ask one of the young masters present to help me divided the cake. Today, I didn’t have a male companion with me. I hope this young master can also be my partner for the first dance.” When these words came out, it immediately caused an uproar. Every one of them believed they were qualified and all raised their hand. Each and every one of them outdoing one another, wishing they could gain Luo Rou’s approval.

Nian Bing glanced at Yan Feng. “Big Brother Yan, are you not interested?”

Yan Feng indifferently said, “I’m not interest. If you say the words, I can lend you a hand in this.”

Nian Bing smiled. “That’s good! Then, I’ll trouble you Big Brother Yan.”

There was a trace of surprise in Yan Feng’s eyes. “You really want to go?”

Nian Bing faintly smiled and said, “Why not? I have one dance with the Wise Girl and I won’t have come here in vain. Big Brother Yan, we can leave more quickly this way, if not, we will have to wait for Miss Luo Rou to pick a dance partner.”

Yan Feng looked deeply at Nian Bing. He nodded before saying, “Very good. I’ll help you. Follow behind me.” As he finished speaking, he strided towards where the crowd was the most dense. Faint white qi faintly emitted from Yan Feng’s body. Everyone who came in contact with his dou qi dropped down one after another from each of his side. Originally, they wanted to be angry, but, with one glance at Yan Feng’s ice-cold appearance, they refrained themselves. Yan Feng’s action immediately drew everyone’s attention, including Xue Jing. Except for Yan Feng himself and Nian Bing, at this instant, everyone thought that Yan Feng wanted to cut the cake with Luo Rou. For a moment, there was only silence. It seemed like no one wanted to fight with him over the matter of the cake. There was no more need to use dou qi to pressure them to make way for him.

Xue Jing's complexion slightly changed. Today, the main reason why she came was for Yan Feng and, right now, she saw Yan Feng wanted to cut the cake for her best friend. Immediately, her heart felt complicated.

Luo Rou looked at Yan Feng walking toward her. She couldn't help from lightly smiling and said, "Young Master Yan, you want to help me cut this cake? This is Luo Rou's honor."

Yan Feng walked until he was in front of the cake. He swept a glance at Luo Rou and the other women and nodded at the Count who was standing on the side. He spoke, "No, not me. It's my friend who wants Miss Luo Rou to give him this opportunity." As he finished, he stepped aside and everyone took notice of the person who was behind him, a mage in a fiery red gown. When they saw him appeared, Xue Jing and Long Ling couldn't help but gasp in surprise. When Luo Rou saw Nian Bing's handsome appearance, she couldn't help showing a suspicious look. He had uncommon temperament and in his beautiful eyes, there was a flash of an extraordinary splendor. At this instant, Nian Bing became the focus of the entire banquet.

Nian Bing walked next to Yan Feng. He was looking at the three women with a calm look and said with a smile, "Miss Luo Rou, may I have the honor of assisting you?"

"Out of question!" Luo Rou didn't even open her mouth, but Xue Jing rushed to yell. As she yelled those words, she realized she was extremely anxious and felt everyone looking at her with curious look. She couldn't help but continue, "I, I mean his identity isn't

qualified enough.”

Yan Feng coldly said, “Mad Girl Xue Jing, as expected, you really deserve to be called Mad Girl. This is Miss Luo Rou’s birthday banquet. Are you going to go mad? He is my friend. Another thing, with his identity, he’s already qualified.”

Hearing Yan Feng, Xue Jing was already speechless. She glared ferociously at Nian Bing and no longer said a word.

Chapter 19.2 – The Wise Luo Ruo

Nian Bing acted as if he had not seen Xue Jing's stare. As before, he looked into Luo Rou's eyes, blue as his own. "May I have the honor of assisting you?"

Although her heart was filled with suspicion, Luo Ruo lived up to the title of Wise Girl. In these circumstances, she smiled slightly and said, "Just now, when Jing Jing greeted you, I will take her place in apologizing to the young lord. There are no status based divisions at Luo Rou's birthday feast. Everyone who comes is a guest; all are Luo Rou's friends. Please, young lord." While saying this, she took the cake knife in her hand and passed it to Nian Bing.

A simple sentence immediately resolved the awkward atmosphere. Nian Bing walked up to Luo Rou's side. To her, he gave a small nod. He said, "If the misses would please step back, in order to avoid cream splattering on you."

Luo Rou cast a glance at Nian Bing, and stepped back together with Long Ling and Xue Jing. Nian Bing's hand gripped the knife handle. Even though it was a different knife, because of his experience with knives, he could clearly perceive the cake knife's aura. He shot a glance at the dining cart's plates. Yan Feng came to his side and passed the first plate into his hands. Nian Bing smiled lightly, saying, "This first piece, is naturally for today's birthday girl, Miss Wise Girl."

A light flashed. Besides Yan Feng at Nian Bing's side, no one could clearly see what sort of hand movements he did. A slice of cake had already appeared neatly on the plate. What was even

more fantastic was that no cream could be seen on the knife. On the leftover cake, the incision was extremely neat with not even a little bit of cream touching it. Nian Bing took the plate to give to the Wise Girl behind him. “This piece of cake will be Miss Wise Girl’s birthday present from me.”

Even if the Wise Girl was brilliant, she, too, could not understand Nian Bing’s intentions. Long Ling next to her could not help but ask, “This is obviously Ruo’er’s household’s cake, how can it be a present you gave?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “Miss Wise Girl, just taste and see, this is a one of a kind slice of cake.”

Luo Rou’s and Nian Bing’s gazes met. She was surprised to discover that she could not see through the abnormal, handsome male in front of her. She took a spoon from a servant at the side. She scooped a small piece of the cake and put in her mouth. While she was scooping, she discovered that the cake seemed to have some hardness. The cake entered her mouth, and Luo Rou could not help but exclaim in surprise, “How cold!” The originally soft cake had many distinguishably sweet scents. It had turned into an icy clear cream when it entered her mouth. The sweet, refreshing scent immediately filled her mouth and nose. It made Luo Rou’s spirit shake. Her pale, smart face had flushed red.

Nian Bing gave a little smile, saying, “How is it?” Ice Magic was put into the cake, it seemed simple, but the heat control was extremely important. If the ice element was too little, the flavor of the cake would be somewhat off. If too much, then the cake would become an inedible lump of ice. It required precise use at the

perfect spot. Maybe only Nian Bing, who was a Magic Chef, could make this.

Luo Rou's eyes glittered. To Nian Bing, she nodded her head and said, "Thank you very much, young lord. Luo Rou is very pleased with this present. It has already been long since there was something that could make me want to eat more than a few bites. I don't know if it is possible for the young lord to let my two sisters try this deliciousness too?"

The nobles at the event naturally did not understand the meaning of their conversation, but Luo Rou's words did not seem to be fake. In a moment, they could not help but cast their curious stares at Nian Bing.

Nian Bing smiled indifferently. His face held a cold, arrogant air. "My apologies, Miss Luo Rou. As I said, that today only you could sample this kind of special present." Turning around, the knife light flashed. Piece after piece of cake was cut by the knife and placed onto the empty plates. Nian Bing's every ten cuts only took a moment. He made Yan Feng divide the cake out. At the venue, there were no lack of people familiar with martial arts. They all saw that Nian Bing did not use any Dou Qi. He relied only on his precise knife skills and exceptional wrist strength to put on such a display. His strength control was extremely mystifying. Every piece of cake sustained no damage. The size was all completely identical. It was only that when the cake entered the mouths of the nobles, it still had its original flavor.

When Nian Bing had placed the last piece of cake into someone's hands, the seven layer cake had been completely divided up. Every

person got a piece, no more no less. When added to the fact that every piece was exactly the same size, it was obvious that everything had already been especially calculated.

Luo Rou had eaten less than half of the cake in her hands. Looking at Nian Bing who had finished dividing the cake, she lightly smiled and said, “I really did not think that the young lord could completely divide the cake so quickly.”

Nian Bing held the cake in his hands and walked in front of Luo Rou. He smiled slightly and said, “If it was some other person, maybe they would have no way of dancing together with miss.” Suddenly, dividing the cake looked like a simple task. But if it had been an ordinary person, cutting these one hundred plus slices of cake would require some time. Taking advantage of this time, the dance would’ve started earlier. Luo Rou could’ve completely used waiting for the cake to be cut as a reason to refuse others’ invitation to dance. And once the person cutting the cake had finished, she could’ve found another reason to conveniently avoid the dance. It seemed that these schemes are undoubtedly from the one called Wise Girl. When she asked for someone to replace her in cutting the cake, Nian Bing already understood it all. This Wise Girl, although appeared to be gentle and peaceful, was actually covered in sharp points. Her inner arrogance is something only an intellectual could see.

Luo Rou’s knew that Nian Bing had already seen through her plans. In her hand half of the cake had already been eaten. At the time, the three great beauties of Ice Snow City gaze’s had fallen on his person. Luo Rou’s gaze was provocative, Long Ling’s was filled with curiosity and query, and Xue Jing’s, the most obvious one, was filled with anger and a sliver of curiosity.

Luo Rou said in a clear voice, “After everyone has eaten their cake, feel free to participate in dancing. Luo Rou, right now, must keep her promises and dance with this mage for the first song. Music, please.”

Mellifluous music began to play. Luo Rou extended her right arm to Nian Bing. Nian Bing smiled slightly and took hold of her small hand, naturally embracing her slender waist that seemed like it could break at any moment. His foot slid to step into the dance floor. The guests, aware of these two, scattered to let them have the center. Nian Bing’s dance skills, although unpracticed, gradually came together with the music.

Luo Rou’s scent was very faint, but it was enough to make Nian Bing recall deeply. This scent seemed to be that of an orchid. Her soft hands, as if boneless, felt indescribably comfortable in his palms. They stared deeply into each other’s blue eyes. From on outside person’s point of view, these were gazes filled with deep intimacy. Nian Bing and Luo Rou both knew that the person standing opposite of them was sending out a look of challenge.

Luo Rou’s cherry blossom lips hummed. In a voice only Nian Bing could hear, she said, “Where are you from? I can determine that you are not from this city because in the Ice Moon Empire, there are very few blondes.”

Nian Bing smiled slightly. Using a similarly low voice he answered, “That’s right, I have not been in Ice Snow City for very long. Miss naturally could not have seen me somewhere. I have long since heard the name Wise Girl. Today, as I expected, the

name was not given for nothing. To be able to dance with Miss is definitely a great honor.”

Luo Rou’s crystal clear eyes exuded a sliver of dissatisfaction. “In front of the so-called famous people, there is no need to speak falsely. Is it necessary to use such tiger balm speech to offer excuses? Can you tell me who you came with? Yan Feng is not someone who associates with other people as he wishes, and today, it seemed that he came by himself. I think that you should not have known each other for too long. To make him help you, it seems that your distinguished self’s charisma is not small!”

Nian Bing said without batting an eyelid, “It is probably because Brother Yan and I were brought together by fate. For Miss Luo Rou to know where I am from, it is not difficult. You need only to ask your good sisters and you will know.”

Luo Rou’s eyes, for the first time, emitted a light of surprise. It seemed she had already come to a conclusion. “Don’t tell me, don’t tell me that you are the fake boyfriend Jing Jing came together with?”

Nian Bing said indifferently, “As expected, you are really close sisters. Even these things you already know. Is it still necessary for me to explain anything?”

Luo Rou gave an expression of being deep in thought. As before, Nian Bing’s passionate eyes looked into hers. Luo Rou knew, since the first time she and Nian Bing had crossed swords, she had already lost. Lost to Nian Bing’s mystery. Ever since she was small, this was her first time having a taste of defeat. Her mind could not

help but have a profound understanding of the youth in front of her.

The guests in the surrounding dance floor watched the man and woman, with gazes of envy and praise. The man was handsome and tall, and the girl was stunning and glamorous, just like a golden son and a jade daughter. Even Luo Rou's father, the old count, could not help but nod his head in satisfaction. He held social parties many times, but this was the first time he saw a man with the looks and stature that could match up to his own precious baby daughter.

Chapter 19.3 – The Wise Luo Rou

The first song entered its coda. Luo Rou pulled away from Nian Bing's large hands to execute two beautiful spins. Nian Bing's right hand embraced her waist, making her back arch. At the same time, he stepped forward half a step and pressed his face close to Luo Rou, his eyes exuding a faint smiling expression. Using an ordinary voice, he said, "Miss Luo Rou's dance form is truly beautiful. Compared to that, mine is so out of practice." He applied a slight force, and Luo Rou straightened up her back. Sweeping a gaze full of charm over Nian Bing, she said "Young lord is too modest. Although you may be unfamiliar with dancing, your movements blend well with the music. With time, Luo Rou would definitely be unable to match up. Okay, everyone, distinguished guests, please dance as much as you'd like." After announcing the dance party had officially started, Luo Rou led Nian Bing along by the hand to the side of the dance floor. She could not endure her curiosity and wanted to ask her sisters for clarity.

At the moment, Xue Jing had already forgotten about Nian Bing and stood next to Yan Feng. In a low voice she said, "You don't dance?"

Yan Feng swept a cold eye over her, and said indifferently, "Sorry, I don't. Even more, I don't dance with women who humiliate my friends."

Xue Jing said with a little anger, "Your friend? How long have you and him known each other? Don't tell me that right now in your mind, he is more important than me?"

Yan Feng could not endure any longer and shot a glance at Xue Jing. “No, you’re wrong. It’s not important; it’s very important.”

Hearing these words, Xue Jing’s eyes had emitted a slightly happy expression, but once she heard the last clause, the healthy skin color of her pretty face faded from redness, and she almost fainted. “Fine Yan Feng, remember me well.”

“Jing Jing, come, I have something to ask you.” Right at this moment, Luo Rou’s voice rang out timely. Xue Jing turned her body to look, just to see Luo Rou pulling Nian Bing by the hand at the side. One look at Nian Bing, and she immediately found it difficult to breathe. In her mind she secretly said, ‘Stupid Nian Bing, damned Nian Bing, you will die today.’ While thinking this, despite her previously assumed manner of a wise and virtuous woman, she took big steps forward.

Shi Jiu had originally wanted to ask Long Ling to dance, but was prevented by Luo Rou. Nian Bing smiled slightly saying, “Big Brother Shi Jiu, Ling’er, how are you, I didn’t think that I would see you here today.”

Long Ling’s beautiful brows creased lightly, saying, “I really did not think! Nian Bing, you are an Ice Mage, why are you wearing a Fire magic gown today? Moreover, the rank is also wrong! Those clothes look familiar.”

Xue Jing, who had just arrived, heard the last sentence and snorted, saying, “Of course it looks familiar. Aren’t his clothes and the wand in his hand the things you lent me?”

Luo Rou looked at Nian Bing with suspicion, but did not open her mouth. Long Ling stared, wide-eyed. “What? Jingjing, didn’t you say he was a wood.....”

Xue Jing, now in front of her sisters, didn’t want to give a harsh strike against her reputation and leave Nian Bing with any sentiment or face. Very fiercely, she snapped back, “That’s right, he is a woodcutter. I did not think that he was actually playing a trick on me.”

Nian Bing smiled indifferently. He said, “Jing’er, how could you say I was playing a trick on you! I helped your good friend cut her cake, is that not keeping in accordance with my pretend position? Don’t forget, right now, I am your boyfriend. I know you all want to ask some questions about how I am so skilled at knife work and cake cutting. It’s actually very simple. I’ve chopped wood for many years. My arm skills have naturally become very proficient. No matter what the thing is, it is actually just like chopping.” He didn’t say a lie, so the expression in his eyes remained undisturbed. When Luo Rou, who had already determined something, saw that calm expression, her mind could not help but arise some doubt to her determinations.

Xue Jing said angrily, “You, you did that on purpose, right? Just what did you say to Yan Feng?”

Nian Bing said indifferently, “I only greeted Brother Yan. He was unlike how you described him; associating with him gives people a comfortable feeling.”

Xue Jing could not suppress her flames of anger. “Get out, get out of here! Return and await my revenge!” Nian Bing’s transformation and Yan Feng’s coldness had thoroughly incited the Mad girl.

“Jingjing.” Luo Rou called out in a somewhat displeased voice. After all, Nian Bing had danced the first song with her and had already become the most important and distinguished guest. If he was chased away by Xue Jing, this party would have no point of continuing.

Nian Bing smiled calmly and said, “Sorry, Miss Xue Jing. I did not sell myself to you as a slave. Every person has their own self-esteem, I hope your words will adhere to propriety. Moreover, you do not have the authority to send away a Great Mage. Did I speak correctly Ling’er?” While saying this, he had already directed his gaze to Long Ling, who was so surprised she had become lifeless.

Xue Jing’s voice was harsh, for it was filled with the anger birthed by the confrontation. She had already forgotten the present occasion. “Great Mage? Are you talking about yourself? What kind of person are you?”

“Jingjing.” Luo Rou and Long Ling spoke at the same time. At the present, Long Ling had already woken up and walked between Nian Bing and Xue Jing. She said in a low voice, “Jingjing, no matter what sort of conflict you two may have right now, today is Rou’er’s birthday. Don’t feel disappointed. Moreover, what Nian Bing said is correct. He has the position of a Great Mage at our Association, so you have no authority to make him leave.”

Xue Jing was dumbfounded. “Ling’er, you really know him?”

Long Ling nodded her head. She said, “Jingjing, though I don’t know what sort of misunderstanding you two have, there’s one thing I know for sure. Remember how I told you about the new Great Mage who entered the Association? That’s Nian Bing! He’s younger than me but has already reached the realm of a Great Mage. He has received my father and several of the Magic Scholars’ acknowledgement.”

Luo Rou nodded while bringing out her previously leftover cake. “I can confirm this using this piece of ice cream like cake as proof.”

Xue Jing was dumbfounded, absolutely completely dumbfounded. She never would’ve thought that Nian Bing, who had always looked abnormally weak in her eyes, would actually be a genius mage. This suddenly appearing contrast was difficult for her to accept. But she clearly knew that Long Ling and Luo Rou would never lie to her. Everything was true. The light in her eyes abruptly turned cold. Glaring at Nian Bing, her state of mind turned calm. “Rou’er, sorry, I cannot continue participating in your birthday banquet. I will visit your home some other day to apologize. I will be leaving first.” After saying this, she stepped out calmly, gracefully heading outside. Long Ling and Luo Rou who were familiar with her knew that right now, Xue Jing was on the verge of a volcanic eruption. They were afraid that there was no way for this matter to end well.

“Nian Bing, what just happened?” Shi Jiu, who had kept quiet all this time, could not help but asked.

Nian Bing smiled calmly. He said, “Nothing, it’s only that Miss Xue Jing and I had a misunderstanding. Big Brother Shi Jiu, with such elegant music, do you not want to ask Ling’er to dance?”

Shi Jiu stared blankly before immediately reacting. To Nian Bing, he gave a small, but grateful smile, and offered out his right arm like a gentleman. At the present, Long Ling did not have a reason to refuse Shi Jiu. She still yet wanted to ask for clarification, but could not help but first slide onto the dance floor with Shi Jiu.

Nian Bing stood calmly there, looking at the man and woman pair dancing lightly and gracefully. His mood was very relaxed. This time, he could completely leave the Pure Wind House.

“Do you not think that this was cruel to Jingjing?” Luo Rou stood at Nian Bing’s side and spoke indifferently.

“Cruel? I don’t think so. Miss Luo Rou, you are called wise girl. Do not you think that Xue Jing is going to suffer some setbacks because of her character?” Nian Bing turned his head to look at Luo Rou.

Luo Rou’s brow wrinkled slightly. “Saying this, are you trying to help her?”

Nian Bing spoke calmly, “At the very least, this is what I believe. Xue Jing helped me previously. Though I concealed my status as a mage, I had not the faintest sliver of ill intention towards her. Speaking honestly, if she was a man, with the kind of insult she

gave me today, I probably would have retaliated, but she is, after all, a woman. You can't have a good fight with a woman, therefore, I just chose to display my real status today. Probably you believed that I've harmed Xue Jing, but the fact is, between us, we are not really friends. She definitely does not feel deeply hurt, only angry. Many people hate me, but do you think I care? You are the Wise Girl and Xue Jing is your friend. If you can help change her current disposition and manner of speaking, she would experience less defeat."

Luo Rou's expression was somewhat strange. "What sort of person are you, really? I actually do not understand what you plan to achieve by doing all these things."

Nian Bing smiled indifferently and said, "I am only an ordinary mage, did you not hear what Ling'er said? I am an ice mage who has not been in the Mage Association for long."

Luo Rou smiled. "Nian Bing, this should be your name. You've already attracted my interest." Like a rat catching the scent of a cat, Nian Bing shuddered for no reason.

"Miss Luo Rou, if you want to find out more details about me, then you'll have to exhaust all of your tricks. I apologize for disrupting your birthday banquet today, but I am extremely happy to be able to meet the Wise Girl. If I have the chance, Nian Bing will definitely come to your house to call on you. I must also bother you to tell Ling'er that I will be going ahead to the Association and that I will be in the library if she ever needs me."

Luo Rou was somewhat disappointed. She said, "You're going

back already?”

Nian Bing said with a smile, “Even if I stay, I’m afraid that Miss Luo Rou would not accompany me for another dance. Therefore, I will go back. I am not fond of the feeling of being targeted by a multitude of arrows.”

Luo Rou’s expression changed. “Then will you ever go back to the Pure Wind House?” She had really wanted to ask him to accompany her for another dance, but the words were stuck and refused to come out.

Chapter 20.1 – Yan Feng’s Unusual Hobby

Nian Bing shook his head, saying, “At least right now I won’t. But when I do go back to the Pure Wind House, I most certainly will not be in this kind of position.”

Luo Rou smiled slightly and said, “Today can be regarded as your win, but not for long. When I know everything about you, I will make you accept total defeat.”

Nian Bing assumed a terrified expression. “I already sincerely wish to concede. Miss, don’t make things any harder for me.”

Luo Rou snorted and said, “Are you disdaining to fight me, a little girl?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “I would not dare. It is only because I have no time to fight with Miss. If Miss has the ability to enter the Mage Association Library, then she can find me anytime. For at least one month, I will not leave the Mage Association.”

“Saying this means you accept my challenge. Good, let me show you out.” Having said this, without waiting for Nian Bing’s response, she took the initiative to pull him by the hand and walk out side-by-side.

The night was clear and cold, like water; the air was especially fresh and clean. Luo Rou pulled Nian Bing onto the small road in the courtyard and slowly walked outside. They were like a pair of lovers. With a beauty to one side, Nian Bing felt relaxed and

comfortable, yet he did not have even the barest sliver of desire. “Nian Bing, shall we make a bet?” Luo Rou said with a small smile.

Although she spoke very easily, Nian Bing could feel the edge embedded within. “A bet? Sorry, I am not a gambler.”

Luo Rou said, “Do you not dare? Are you scared of losing to me?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly. “To ask a general is not as effective as exciting a general. If it’s provocation issued by the Wise Girl, I’m afraid there isn’t a single person who could escape. No harm in hearing you out. What kind of bet are you making?”

Luo Rou said, “We will bet for one month. If in a month, I fail to discover your true identity, then it will be considered my loss. If I do find out, then it will be your loss. How about it?”

Nian Bing looked at Luo Rou, saying, “Don’t you already know my real identity? I am not concealing anything, or rather, this is better; for you to find out my identity is truly too difficult a task, the difficulty almost borders on the impossible. We’ll bet on my occupation, only if you can find out my real occupation and offer sufficient evidence, will it be regarded as your win. What shall we bet?”

Luo Rou smiled a little, saying, “Okay, we will go with your terms. That said, you definitely aren’t just a simple mage. If I win, you must agree to one of my conditions, and conversely, I will agree to one of your conditions.”

Nian Bing said somewhat jokingly, “This conditions you speak of is too vague. If I win and I wanted Miss to become my wife, don’t tell me you would agree?”

Luo Rou released Nian Bing’s hand and laughed like silver bells. “Of course those sort of conditions are not possible, however, it would be amazing if you could beat me. I’ve bet with other people before and I’ve never lost. I’ve brought you here; I will go back – there are still many guests waiting for me. We will definitely see each other again. When you lose, you are not allowed to act shamelessly.”

Seeing Luo Rou’s receding back, Nian Bing could only helplessly laugh. He did not think that he would break away from Xue Jing, only to be provoked into this mess. Wise Girl Luo Rou would not be as easily handled as Xue Jing. He only hoped that the month would end quickly, and he would finally leave this chaotic place.

While thinking this, Nian Bing walked outwards. The butler at the entrance was nowhere to be seen. The soldiers were guarding the mansion as before. Stretching his body, he gazed at the sky. Today was really tiring, however, when he would go to the Association, he would first read some books. He had not finished reading the last book from the other day. Thinking about it, Nian Bing’s spirits immediately soared. In the world of books, his thinking had opened up, and time passed quickly. Thinking about this, he could not help but increase his pace and walked to the back of the garden. Determining his path, he headed in the direction of the Mage Association.

He had not traveled far when Nian Bing felt the Heavenly Flower

Tile on his chest emit a warm airflow. Nian Bing's heart stuttered and he immediately halted his steps. The Heavenly Flower Tile was a treasure. At dangerous moments, it would send him a warning. When he was still in the Peach Blossom Forest, he had met a poisonous malaria wasp, but thanks to the treasure's prompt warning, he was able to prepare magic and get through the crisis. Without unnecessary hesitation, a faint and condensed blue light revolved around Nian Bing's body. While he chanted a rhythmic incantation, he looked around the large empty street.

The Heavenly Flower Tile's warning was completely correct. A skin-piercing airstream with great oppressive force suddenly shot out from a rooftop on the left. Rushing out to Nian Bing's position was a red light. Feeling the airflow of the attack, Nian Bing suddenly knew who it was. At that moment, he had finished his spell. But when he was just about to release his defensive rank 4 Ice Edge Shield, suddenly from an oblique angle, a white light pierced through. The white light was not very intense, but it was very quick. Though released afterwards, it still arrived much faster, catching up to the red light and blocking its front from Nian Bing.

A soft dinging sound came out, and a sharp intense sound shook Nian Bing's eardrums painfully. Subconsciously, he retreated next to the wall. Two silhouettes, white and silver, simultaneously fell to the ground. The silver figure was naturally as Nian Bing who assumed, Mad Girl Xue Jing. The white figure, on the other hand, beyond his expectations, was Yan Feng. Before, when Nian Bing was leaving, Yan Feng seemed to have gone to the bathroom, leaving Nian Bing with no way to send his regards before leaving.

In Yan Feng's hands was the white scabbard of the short blade. "Mad girl, even now you're going crazy. As a martial arts

cultivator, you're actually hiding somewhere to sneak attack a mage, you are really not suited to practicing martial arts."

Xue Jing's eyes were full of fury. Furiously, she glared at Nian Bing. "So I sneak attacked, what do you care? You are an outsider, why did you save him? Get away from here, today I will kill him."

Nian Bing's eyebrows creased slightly. He said, "Xue Jing, I didn't think we have such animosity between us."

Xue Jing's eye rims were suddenly red. "None? After what happened today, how am I supposed to lift my head in front of my sisters? I ask you, since you are a mage, why did you come to our Pure Wind House to chop wood? Why did you lie to me? Everything else you did, it was all a farce right? It was all to deceive me right? What sort of hatred exists between us for you to scheme against me."

Nian Bing did not think that Xue Jing would complicate such a simple matter. His eyebrows wrinkled a bit. "Xue Jing, you're not wrong, I am a mage. But going to your house to chop wood was completely because I was delighted to. I have my own goals, I never thought of deceiving you. You never asked me whether or not I could do magic. Is not telling you that lying? Calm down a bit, okay?"

"Calm down? I will not calm down. Today, in front of so many guests, most people saw you and I come together, but you didn't acknowledge me and danced the first song with Rou'er. What were your intentions? Was it to make a demonstration of me? You are such a vile, contemptible person, and today I will kill you." The

long sword lit up with the red light of Dou Qi, and was obviously going to strike again.

Nian Bing was suddenly suffused with a funny feeling. He clearly discovered that the reason for Xue Jing's hatred was largely because of jealousy. Thinking of jealousy, these two characters, he could not help but feel funny. Don't say that this unruly girl who had always looked down him actually carried good feelings towards him?

The red light exploded and the long sword in Xue Jing's hands, like a rainbow piercing towards the sun, hacked down at Nian Bing. With such vigorous fierceness, it was obvious that Xue Jing used all of her strength.

A white curtain rose up from below. A silvery sound rang out, one after the other. Nian Bing only felt that before his eyes was a flower. Xue Jing and Yan Feng had already come five meters in front of him. It's just that currently, Xue Jing's face appeared somewhat pale. Only half remained of the precious sword in her hands. The short knife/sword, emitting a faint cold air, was held at her slender neck. Killing intent from Yan Feng's eyes came out nonstop. He said coldly, "Mad girl, I don't care if you go crazy in front of me, but you wanted to kill my friend. Don't expect me to be polite. Other people would have misgivings about your father, but I don't care."

"Yan Feng, stay your hand." Nian Bing hurriedly yelled out. Going over in front of the two, very briefly, he saw that Xue Jing's eyes looked at him for one moment, then she looked at Yan Feng the next. It seemed as if she did not know there was a sword that

could take her life anytime. Tears flowed down her soft skin and tumbled down. In an instant, her sad aura filled the air. Suddenly, Nian Bing saw a strange expression coming from Xue Jing's eyes. In the midst of anger and hurt, there was utter despair. In his mind, he secretly cried out, 'Not good'. His response was very quick. Realizing in an instant that something was wrong, he immediately raised his hand to grab Yan Feng's short sword.

Chapter 20.2 – Yan Feng’s Unusual Hobby

Just as Nian Bing determined that, Xue Jing closed her eyes. She actually was going to run herself through Yan Feng’s short sword. Yan Feng did not have enough time to react. At this critical moment, Nian Bing’s outstretched arm reached and directly grabbed at Yan Feng’s short sword. Xue Jing’s side directly bumped into his arm. Blood flowed down Nian Bing’s arm, dyeing Yan Feng’s sword red. The short sword seemed to have intelligence and seemed excited. Xue Jing felt that something was not right. When she opened her eyes, she could clearly see bright scarlet blood drip onto the ground.

Nian Bing sighed softly, and helplessly looked at Xue Jing. “Why do you even bother? Can you not even withstand this kind of attack? When you were going to run yourself through the blade, did you not even think of your family and friends? Xue Jing, although you’re named Mad Girl, crazy should still have some limits. Life is bestowed by heavens. Every person has only a few decades; you must treasure your own life.

Yan Feng used his left hand to stem the blood vessels of Nian Bing’s wrist. He said indifferently, “She wants to die, than let her die. Why would you go through so much trouble to save her?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly, saying, “Brother Yan, you are really extreme. As I said, life is a precious treasure, to say nothing of the fact she had a crazed mind for just a period of time, that is all. Miss Xue Jing helped me before, and I did conceal the fact that I was a mage from her. This sword is like I gave it to her. Miss Xue Jing, from now on, I don’t owe you, and you don’t owe me. Please go back.

Although the blood flowed slowly, upon seeing the fresh blood drip to the ground, the anger in Xue Jing's eyes faded away. In its place was a complicated light. Biting her lower lip, she slowly retreated backwards. Violently, she took the short sword in her hands and casted it onto the ground. She turned to run into the pitch black night, followed by two sparkling and translucent teardrops drifting through the wind.

“Nian Bing, how are you? My Frost Flame Knife is extremely sharp. Maybe it has already damaged your muscles and bones, what do we do? I still haven't taken out my knife. I'll bring you to the doctor right away.” Yan Feng had already lost his cold arrogance from before. His feelings of deep concern clearly exhibited themselves in his speech. Seeing his worried expression, Nian Bing's mind was filled with an improper feeling. He said hurriedly, “My thanks to brother Yan for your concern, but relax. It is not as serious as you think. Your knife is very sharp, even the ice in my hand was cut in half.” While saying this, he slowly opened his hand. Two sharpened pieces of ice dyed red fell to the ground. Though the blood flow was not small, the wound was actually superficial. Xue Jing's bumping into him only made Yan Feng's Frost Flame Knife cut through the ice to pierce Nian Bing's skin.

“Life is the source! Send out your clear light, bestow curing water with the imprint of life on me and remove the pain of the wound. — Hydrotherapy Spell.” A blue light condensed around Nian Bing's hand. Like a thread, it bubbled up in the center of his palm. The result of the blue light could almost be seen by the naked eye. It continuously healed his wounded hand.

Nian Bing smiled in satisfaction. He said, “As expected, the book has such a yellow gold room. Yesterday, it was not clear to determine if this rank two Hydrotherapy Spell is more useful than the rank one Healing Spell.” This second rank spell was something he had learned in a water element magic book the day before. Not only did he possess ice abilities, he could also be considered a water mage at the same time. But water mages, on the other hand, were unable to utilize the powers of ice magic. This is why, in the continental magic world, ice magic outranked the four ordinary magic.

Yan Feng sighed in acclamation. “Magic is really a mystical thing. Even a simple healing technique cannot be attained by martial arts.

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “Many thanks to brother Yan for saving me. Although magic has its advantages, martial arts similarly has its special points. “

Yan Feng, at the present, did not have his cold demeanor. He smiled, saying, “So courteous. Actually, I already saw that you had prepared, but I went crazy out of concern and could not help but make a move. That Mad Girl is really crazy, to actually want to kill a person because of such a small matter.

The inappropriate feeling in Nian Bing’s heart gradually grew stronger. He had seen something from Yan Feng’s eyes. With great difficulty, he smiled and said, “Brother Yan, I have things to do, I must return to the Mage Association.”

Yan Feng was somewhat reluctant to part. He said, “Brother

Nian, we are already friends. May I come to the Mage Association to see you some other time? Oh right, you can call me by my nickname, Juhua, Yan Juhua.

Nian bing was overcome with a full body chill. But at the moment, he couldn't reject Yan Feng who had saved him. With a feeling of resisting the urge to vomit, he nodded and said, "Of course you can. Brother Yan, I hope that we will see each other again." With this said, he gave a little nod to Yan Feng, and turned to the direction of the Mage Association. While walking, he thought, 'Xue Jing, oh Xue Jing, you fell for such a type of person. You unfortunately like this piece of glass.' Upon thinking this, Nian bing could not help but let out a full body shiver. After today, he really did not want to see that Brother Yan again

While walking towards the Mage Association, Nian Bing's mind continuously reverberated with Yan Feng's secret grudge gaze. He shivered all over his body and lifted up his gown. He discovered that on his skin, a layer of goosebumps appeared. It's no wonder that guy looked at him in a way different from the masses. It's no wonder that Xue Jing, such a beautiful girl, could not elicit a change in expression from him. He actually had such a nauseating hobby¹. It's a good thing he realized this from his expressions early on. If not, he may have been tangled in a very troublesome matter. It was very obvious that guy had reached a high level in martial arts. Only if he used his Ice Snow Goddess' Sigh with his ice and fire source magic would he have a small chance to defeat him. Besides, he did not have any evil intentions. He had no reason to make a move against him. Right now, he hoped that he would not find him again. Otherwise, if other people misunderstood, even jumping into the Azure Sky River could not wash his reputation clean.

Slowly, he walked on the street. Nian Bing's heart was light; the matter with Xue Jing had finally been resolved. Although it might be very difficult for her to accept, at the very least, he had taken a knife for her. Even if she went mad again, she wouldn't look at him with a hate filled glare.

Hurried horses' hooves could suddenly be heard. Nian Bing hastily went to the side. The road he was walking on could not be considered broad. If he was hit, he would really be out of luck.

xijinjin (apparently the sound of horses neighing) neigh. Two fine steeds stopped in front of Nian Bing. He was surprised to find out that the owner of the horses were actually Long Ling and Shi Jiu. The two dismounted from their horses. Shi Jiu said with dissatisfaction, "I say, brother, how could you leave without a word? "

Nian Bing smile bitterly. "Could I stay and not go in such a situation?"

Long Ling's previously warn gaze had turned somewhat more nippy. "Nian Bing, I need you to explain the thing between you and Jingjing."

Nian Bing smiled bitterly, saying, "Explain? That's very easy. You should already know that it was her who made me dress up as her boyfriend and go to the gathering with her. Before I had entered the Mage Association, I had just arrived in Ice Snow City and was not familiar with life. During a conflict between the Pure

Wind House and the Great City Pavilion, I wanted to find work and settle down. But who knows why the Third Manager of the Great City Pavilion made it hard for me. Xue Jing came in good time and punished that Manager An and brought me to the Pure Wind House to let me work temporarily as a woodcutter. Probably because my looks are passable, she chose me to play the role of her boyfriend.”

Long Ling went blank, then said, “It was that simple?”

Nian Bing shrugged his shoulders and said, “It was that simple. If you don’t believe me, you can go and ask Xue Jing.”

Long Ling’s outstanding eyebrows creases slightly, saying, “To make a Great Mage cut wood is really laughable. However, since Jingjing helped you at the start, why did you embarrass her today at the banquet? Is it because she made you disguise yourself as her boyfriend?”

Nian Bing shook his head. He said, “As I’ve already said to Luo Rou, I only wanted to teach her a lesson. I could bear her humiliating me, but I hoped that she would not stay that way forever. Because she believes herself to be ‘Mad Girl,’ one day, she will inevitably receive an even greater setback. Rather than that, it would be better for me to provoke her. And did it feel like my provocation was too fierce? Then let me say that I am a Great Mage and she is just Ling’er!”

Long Ling looked blankly. Carefully thinking back, Nian Bing did not really do anything. He only cut the cake for Luo Rou and accompanied her for a dance. But Xue Jing, upon learning of Nian

Bing's true identity, had suddenly been greatly shaken by anger and suddenly left the event. Thinking of this, Long Ling's gaze became gradually softer. She lightly nodded her head, saying, "Having said that, you really cannot be blamed. However, I want to know, do you not think of Xue Jing as a friend? "

Notes:

[1\]](#) Note that this was written in 2006 in China. Much different than how things are now.

Chapter 20.3 – Yan Feng’s Unusual Hobby

Nian Bing calmly said, “Maybe I am. Although, I think that in the future, Xue Jing and I won’t be able to meet each other that much. Miss Ling’er, if you are done questioning me, I’ll return to the Association. During that time, I think I won’t leave the Association. If Miss Ling’er still have any doubts, you can find me inside the library at any time. Big Brother Shi Jiu, you are riding a horse, so I’ll take my leave first.” As he finished speaking, he turned around and, with firm steps, he proceeded toward the Mage Association.

Long Ling was somewhat lifeless as she looked at Nian Bing’s back and mumbled, “Senior apprentice, do you think that I am a bit biased toward Jing Jing because she’s my good friend? Nian Bing is from a humble origin and I think Jing Jing must have said something to him that bruised his self-esteem. From the start, I know that Nian Bing is a good person. He doesn’t seem like he wants to harm anyone. He’s only carefully protecting his heart.”

Shi Jiu looked at Nian Bing and toward Long Ling unrestrained words, he inwardly felt happy. He agreed. “Yes! I also think Nian Bing is outstanding, but it’s unfortunate that he’s experienced many hardships since he was a child. Xue Jing, that girl, is really mad. You also can’t let her speak as she pleases. In the future, if there is an opportunity, you need to give her plenty of advice. As for Nian Bing, you don’t need to be anxious for him. I felt like he’s not someone who holds grudges. That matter had already passed, just let it go. It’s getting late, we should also return. I’ll go and bring Nian Bing.” As he finished speaking, he urged the saddled horse to go after Nian Bing.

Nian Bing didn't refuse Shi Jiu's invitation. He didn't put the matter with Xue Jing in his heart, but Long Ling cared about it. He only cared about magic and how he could upgrade his strength. As for everything else, especially women, he didn't think about it with the exception of his bet with the Wise Girl Luo Rou, which left him a bit interested.

The whole journey continued in silence. By the time they returned to the Association, it was already very late at night. Nian Bing properly changed into his Great Mage's clothes. After he returned the fire mage's gown and the Flame Star rod to Long Ling, he arrived at the library all alone.

Among the ocean of magic books, Nian Bing forgot about everything else. He even forgot he should first inform Feng Nu about the situation. He didn't know how much time had passed. From outside, the room was a light in the dark night. Inside the library, the magical lamps could automatically brighten the room. Nian Bing didn't look at every book. He only read books related to magic cultivation and some books on the basic knowledge of magic. Those are the two types of books he needed the most, especially those books that introduced the method of manufacturing magic scrolls. Those books took up most of his study time. Each time someone from the city came to deliver food, Nian Bing's thoughts were concentrated on the book and he didn't look at who delivered his food. He only smelled the fragrance and kept reading while he ate. During this time, that was all he did.

"Urgh! So tired! I don't know how many days it's been." Nian Bing stretched his body, rubbed the sore muscles on his back and slowly got up. He finally read all the books he needed on the first floor. Relying on his inherently strong memory, he was able to

engrave in his mind all the things he wanted to know.

He remembered a lot of things. Again, he didn't rest at all. Nian Bing only felt very dizzy. Although he very much longed to lie down and sleep, he understood that in this kind of situation, he should meditate instead. He can't relax and waste a even a single moment. Magic cultivation was like rowing a boat upstream. If he stopped moving forward, then he will fall back. It had been a while since he connect with the magic elements. His magic power inevitably declined. As he thought about it, he made an effort to rouse his spirit force. He properly sat cross-legged and begun to perceive the magic elements outside his body. With the assistance of the Ice Snow Goddess's Stone and the Flame God's Stone, he restored his spirit force.

By the time Nian Bing had awaken from his meditation, it was daytime. The sunshine passed through the windows of the library and shone onto him, momentarily making him warm. He knew that by continuously meditating through the knowledge of magic he learnt in the depth of the night, he was able to understand some things. He had already started to somewhat understand quite a few things about the source of his fire and ice magics. He indistinctly became aware that the balance between the two types of magic force were not at all stable. He still wanted to further investigate to reach the stage where he could fuse the two magic forces into a genuine Fire and Ice Homology. Practically speaking, he didn't have any guidelines on what to do, after all, Fire and Ice are two opposing magics. Right now, because the two magic forces were whirling inside his body, they didn't influence each other. In the case that balance was to break, he feared that his body would be unable to endure. Don't even mention about the fusion of the magic force, as the problem lay on his ability to preserve his life. For that reason, Nian Bing knew that if he continued to cultivate,

the whirlpool inside of him would keep getting bigger, along with hidden dangers it'll carry with it. So, he didn't dare to be rash. At the moment, he only wished to go to the second floor, the third floor and even, the mysterious fourth floor. If he knew about the theories, he would be able to guide himself. Although what he desired for was very uncertain, there was more or less some clues about the general direction.

As he heard the sound of the door opening, Nian Bing unconsciously raised his head to look. He only saw Long Ling walking in with a tray. As she saw the awakened Nian Bing, she couldn't help but cry in alarm. "Nian Bing, you finish meditating?"

Nian Bing faintly smile and said, "Has it been such a long time since I entered the library? Were you the one who keep delivering my food?"

Long Ling said in a somewhat discontented manner, "You! To like reading books is a good thing, but you can't read day and night like this! If it weren't for my dad who prevented me from disturbing you, I would've already stopped you from reading already. You took three days and three nights just to read books. Afterwards, you meditated for two days and two nights. Really, I never saw anyone so eager to study. It's no wonder that at such a young age, your magic had already reached the Great Mage's realm. Here, for you. Eat something first. You must be hungry after two days of meditation."

Nian Bing took the tray. On it, sat a bowl of plain rice congee, two steamed buns and pickled vegetables. Again, it was only ordinary food. However, at this moment, as he looked at these

food, he clearly felt a warm feeling in his heart. Long Ling is actually a good woman. He could only be considered barely a friend, but she treated him very well. This feeling, he would make sure to pay back.

“What is with that foolish look? Don’t tell me you’re not hungry?” Long Ling lightly touched Nian Bing.

“Ah! I’m hungry. Of course, I’m hungry. I’m eating right away.”

Long Ling learned what it meant to wolf down one’s food in the end. In less than the time to take 30 breaths, the bowl of congee and the two steamed were completely devoured. Nian Bing still continued to wolf down the pickled vegetables until the dish was clean. When he swallowed the last bite, he patted his stomach with satisfaction.

“You eat so quickly. Aren’t you afraid you’d choke?” She looked at Nian Bing who seemed like he hadn’t eat anything in his life before. Long Ling couldn’t help but puff a laugh.

Nian Bing took the tray and gave it back to Long Ling and said, “Many thanks to you. Right now, I managed to rest. I think I should go to the second floor.”

“What?” ‘He still wants to read? Did he even rest for a moment?’ Long Ling looked at Nian Bing with shock.

Nian Bing faintly smiled and said, “No need. The second floor

and the third floor still have many things I need to study. It is very difficult to stumble upon such a treasure trove. I'd really hate to leave it here." As he finished, he proceeded to go upstairs.

Long Ling pulled Nian Bing and said, "Wait for for bit. You know what, yesterday, Jing Jing came to find you. Furthermore, Yan Feng also came."

Nian Bing's brows wrinkled as he asked, "Why are they looking for me?"

Long Ling replied, "Yan Feng came while you were still studying. He also came back the next day. He even saw you a while ago from the door. Since he saw you concentrating, he quietly left. As he was leaving, he even said that your look of concentration was very attractive. He even said a few more strange words but I don't understand what he meant, but, at that time, he was making a kind of face that I saw for the first time."

Nian Bing said with a wry smile, "Alright, no need to describe it. Oh! That's right, Ling'er, who is Yan Feng in the end? It seemed like no one dared to offend him in Ice Snow City, not even Miss Luo Rou's father, the honorable Earl."

Long Ling answered, "Ah! He... his identity is very special. From what I know, he is the seventh son of the current Ice Moon Empire's King, his Highness the Seventh Prince. However, I don't know for what reason he was driven away to Ice Snow City by the King and let him reside here. The King even granted him a mansion here. Yan Feng doesn't seem to have any hobby, except for training martial arts, he sometimes goes out to take a walk

around and he rarely participated in banquets. The other day, he was attending the banquet because he once asked Luo'er for her help in an emergency. I felt that you are very special to him. It's the first time I saw him that concerned about someone else."

Nian Bing sighed and said, "This kind of concern is still not good. Why did Xue Jing want to find me?"

Long Ling spoke, "Jing Jing seemed to have fought with someone and had received an injury. She followed my words and sent someone to find you while she waited at Pure Wind House with that woman. Because of a brief remark, they fought again. As a result, a lot of people were injure since the woman was very difficult to deal with. Nevertheless, Uncle Xue stepped in and told her that you were no longer in Pure Wind House. Then, she agreed to leave. According to Jing Jing, that woman's strength is unexpectedly no less weaker than Uncle Xue. She seemed to have the strength of a Martial Master. Jing Jing wanted me to inform you that the woman broke a lot of things in Pure Wind House. Altogether, it amounts to 167 amethyst coins. You have to come and give the compensation."

Nian Bing whole body slightly trembled. "AH! Don't tell me she went to find me? This is really bad! How can I forget about her? Ling'er, I'll go out first. Many thanks for informing about these matters."

Chapter 21.1 – Fire God’s Left Hand

Without even thinking too deeply about it, Nian Bing knew that the one causing a big ruckus at the Pure Wind House was definitely Feng Nu. Feng Nu was definitely there because he hadn’t gone to see her at all. She also couldn’t find him at the Pure Wind House and got into a fight with Xue Jing. Aiiieee, he was really stupid. While reading books, he forgot about everything else.

Exiting the library, Nian Bing burned with impatience. He didn’t know why, but right now, his mind was filled with images of Feng Nu’s lithe figure. Disregarding propriety, he raised the Icicle Rod up and chanted, “Mighty Ice and Snow Goddess! Please, lend me your anger to send me onto the opposite bank. — Snowstorm.” The blue light particles coming from the Icicle Rod scattered and flew away. The surrounding air immediately chilled. The wind whipped around and the snow fluttered as the Rank 4 Snowstorm gradually became wilder and more violent. Nian Bing completely blended in his internal ice element. His body became surrounded by snow flurries as he rode the snowstorm high into the air.

Although the Snowstorm is only used to fly for short distances, the distance one can travel depended on the mage’s cultivation level; mages with very high cultivations can fly further. With Nian Bing’s current Great Mage magic power, his proficient magic control, and his ability to use the least amount of magic needed to maintain the spell, flying from the Mage Association to the Shui Huo Metal Shop would not be too difficult.

In the distance, Nian Bing could already see the courtyard of the Shui Huo Metal Shop. A red light twisted and turned like a red flood dragon. Although the distance was a bit far, he could faintly

sense that contained within it was an enormous power. Nian Bing controlled the Snowstorm to slowly descend upon the courtyard. As the distance gradually shortened, Nian Bing discovered that the one practicing swordplay was Feng Nu. This was the first time he had seen Feng Nu practice martial arts. His heart trembled slightly. Faintly, he felt the strength of Feng Nu's qi was actually not inferior to Blacksmith God Hua Tian's. The qi pervaded the entire courtyard. The dark red light roused a scorching current of air. The distance from the ground was twenty metres, yet Nian Bing already felt the temperature constantly increasing, causing the Snowstorm to gradually melt. What he saw made him unable to control his descent.

The Snowstorm, after all, definitely had an effect on the air. While Feng Nu was concentrating on practicing, she suddenly felt the surrounding air drop several degrees as the air streams became more intense. Subconsciously, she raised her head to look and saw a blue figure descending down in her direction. She was already in a bad mood, and looking at the situation, she immediately said, "Who is it?" She planted her feet subtly and gripped the Heavenly Flame Sword with two hands. Suddenly, she took a step forward and covered majority of her body in a red, flame qi. As if splitting the heavens and earth, she lifted up the sword. With a sharp hissing sound, the red qi extended from the Heavenly Flame Sword. A red blade-light about a meter wide came directly hacking at Nian Bing.

Suddenly feeling a great oppressive strength coming at him from below, Nian Bing could not help but jump in fright. Being in such a critical situation without having enough time to explain, he subconsciously touched the Morning Dew Knife in his chest. No, as of right now, he should be calling it the Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh. An enormous amount of ice element encircled the cloth of

the knife handle and caused frost to form. Blue light suddenly burst out. Nian Bing did not have enough time to chant a spell. From his chest, he grabbed a pile of paper and scattered it into the air. Under the influence of the Ice and Snow Goddess's sigh, the ten plus pieces of paper actually became a bizarrely large ice net. In order to prevent the Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh from leaking any of the Ice and Snow Goddess' Stone's aura, Nian Bing painstakingly used his magic power around the area of the Ice and Snow Goddess Stone to arrange a small scale boundary. Although this prevented the Ice and Snow Goddess Stone's aura from leaking out, the power of the ice net fell drastically.

Bang! The ice knife collided head on with the large flame blade. A big sound rang out. The flame qi in the shape of a blade weakened under the attack of the ice blades , but the Ice Blade was after all, only a rank 2 ice magic. How could its power compare with an air-splitting qi originating from the Heavenly Flame Sword? Although the light of the qi weakened a bit, it still came cutting down on Nian Bing as before.

The ten or so Ice Blades bought Nian Bing some time. He did not dare to use the Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh again. Instead, he touched the Fire God stone in his chest. Quickly chanting, he said, "Mighty Fire God! Please allow me to make use of your left hand and let the flame descend to earth to eradicate the wicked power. Let the blaze illuminate the whole earth and destroy all the barriers obstructing before me. — The Fire God's Left Hand." The Fire God's Left Hand, according to legend, is the weakest part of the fire god's entire body. Therefore, this summoning of the fire element type fire magic is merely rank 5. If it is changed out with the Fire God's Right Hand, although there is only one word difference, the spell rank would increase by four levels . A rank 9 Fire God's Right Hand could easily destroy a thousand-person

calvary team.

A giant fiery hand appeared in front of Nian Bing at the conclusion of the spell. At this time, the red qi chop had already arrived in front of Nian Bing. The giant fiery hand directly met the slicing qi, but it didn't explode right in front. In a moment, the Fire God's Left Hand grabbed the qi slash and fiercely sent it to the side. The Fire God's Left Hand may have been the weakest part of the Fire God, but it was still a part of the Fire God. Though Rank 5 single target magic is not at the extreme limits of a Great Mage, it still approached the limit. The Heavenly Flame Sword's air-splitting blade qi was extremely powerful, but with the Fire God's Left Hand bringing it to the side, it harmlessly slid past Nian Bing. Under Nian Bing's exquisite control, the Fire God's Left Hand opened at the precisely right time. He did not use magic to destroy the blade qi, but rather redirected it.

"Feng Nu, don't attack, it's me." Nian Bing called out hurriedly. Feng Nu's slicing qi emitted from the Heavenly Flame Sword was too scary. The Fire God's Left Hand could only touch it from the side and weaken it by a third. If he had not relied on the Fire God Stone when summoning, maybe the rank 5 magic would have been destroyed earlier. Just as Long Ling had said, Feng Nu's real strength had definitely reached the level of a Martial Master. Just how old is she! A Martial Master had the equivalent strength of a Magic Scholar.

From below, Feng Nu regretted her decision as soon as she had sent out a sword attack. She had been practicing the sword and when she had discovered a descending, unidentifiable flying object, she subconsciously sent out the sword chop. She had waved her sword before she had determined whether it was friend or

enemy, but the qi had already been sent out. Unless her martial arts attained complete perfection, how could she take it back? The changes in the air had completely surprised her. The qi, although sent out from her sword, still had some connection to her spirit. She clearly felt that in the short period of time it took to blink, ten or so ice blades had blocked her attack. Immediately following that attack, a blazing, giant hand took her attack to dissolve it to the side. Obviously, the opponent was a mage, and with such a quick reaction, the mage could not be so simple. Even if she had not heard Nian Bing's voice yell out, she would not have continued to attack.

Under the protection of the Fire God's Left Hand, Nian Bing slowly descended. Due the effects of the Fire God's Stone, the rank 5 magic had not given been a large burden to cast and didn't leave him exhausted. Still fearful of the previous attack, he landed in front of Feng Nu. Smiling bitterly, he said, "We haven't met in a few days, but there's no need to greet me so, that could kill someone!" When he landed on the ground, the giant Fire God's Left Hand disappeared.

The red light flashed as the Heavenly Flame Sword was returned to its scabbard. Feng Nu, who had already come up to Nian Bing, carefully looked at him and dodged. She let out a breath and said, "Who let you come down from the sky so suddenly. Fortunately I didn't injure you. When I'm practicing the sword, I'll immediately attack anything that comes near because I'm concentrating completely. Luckily, I did not make a serious mistake. There's a door, but you didn't go through. I must insist that you come from the front next time. You, really."

Nian Bing naturally could not blame Feng Nu. Seeing her deeply

concerned expression in her eyes, he said apologetically, “Sorry, it was my bad. Feng Nu, did you go to the Pure Wind House?”

Upon hearing Nian Bing bring up the Pure Wind House, Feng Nu could not help but let out a snort. She said, “Don’t bring up the Pure Wind House again. I went there to find you very politely. As a result, I bumped into an unruly girl who talked carelessly and said you died. I became angry and fought her. Her skills weren’t as good as her mouth. Afterwards, if it were not for a middle aged person from the Pure Wind House who explained the events to me, that day I would’ve taught her a good lesson. Nian Bing, where have you been these past few days? I looked for you but could not find you. You also did not come see me. Don’t tell me I did something to make you hate me?”

Chapter 21.2 – Fire God’s Left Hand

Nian Bing was slack-jawed and tongue-tied from Feng Nu’s question. He hurriedly said, “No! It’s not like that. It’s really my fault.” At once, Nian Bing narrated the simple version of everything that happened to him these past several days. However, he didn’t mention anything about attending the banquet and left out many others things. His story then resumed to him entering the Mage Association.

“So right now, you are already a member of the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association and a Great Mage. You were so absorbed with magic that you even forgot about me.” Although Feng Nu said such words, her pretty face already had a slight smile on it. It was clear that she didn’t really blame Nian Bing.

Nian Bing spoke. “When I followed my master to practice my cooking skills, I was fumbling in the dark trying to cultivate magic. This is the first time I found such an opportunity with great difficulty, so of course, I was engrossed somewhat.”

Feng Nu seemed as if she recalled something. “Oh! That’s right. Earlier, when you blocked my attack, it seemed like you used two kinds of magic. The first one was weaker compared to the other one. However, it slowed down my qi blade. After that, you followed up with that strong magic attack and redirected my qi to the side. Anyway, what baffled me is that your magic doesn’t seem to be of the same nature; one is ice while the other is fire. This is the first time I’ve seen you use them at the same time. I was still under the impression your magic power was very low since you had no guide and you cultivate two kinds of magic. When one has low magic power, it’s hard to discern it on the body. Now that I’ve

seen it, your two kinds of magic seem to have already reached quite a high level. Don't tell me you are really an ice and fire mage? Both are completely opposite in nature!"

Nian Bing was inwardly alarmed. Although he had a very good opinion of Feng Nu, his secret wasn't something he would easily disclose. He hurriedly explained, "I possess a constitution suited towards both ice and fire. Therefore, I am able to cultivate two kinds of magic simultaneously. However, now that I think about it, both magics are opposite in nature and restrain each other. It makes it very difficult to me to reach a high level. In order not to cause a reverse effect, I merely use my magic control to maintain a certain level of magic power. However, as far as I'm concerned, this kind of control is already sufficient. Anyway, I'm only a chef. Magic is only used to supplement my cooking skills. Feng Nu, I didn't expect your martial skills to have unexpectedly reached this level. From what I see, you must have almost reached the cultivation of Martial Master."

An extraordinary splendor flashed through Feng Nu's eyes. She looked at Heavenly Flame Sword sheathed in her hand and nodded before saying, "At last! Nian Bing, I know you have some distrust in your heart and want to know how I can reach such a formidable strength at such a young age. However, I hope you will not ask. You only need to know that I don't have any ill intent toward you. When the True Sun Knife is complete, it will be the day our paths shall diverge. At that time, you will leave Ice and Snow City and I leave this Shui Huo Metal Shop."

Nian Bing was surprised as he looked at Feng Nu. Since the first time he saw Feng Nu, he had sensed there was trace of mysterious aura on Feng Nu's body. However, this trace of mysterious aura

was hidden very deeply. He also didn't think about doing an in-depth investigation. At least, he believed there was no doubt that Feng Nu was Hua Tian's disciple. Otherwise, she wouldn't ask him for his assistance for the inlaying of Fire God's stone. However, right now, it seemed like the situation he feared was more complicated than he had imagine. The mysteries surrounding Feng Nu were not simple, especially her age being completely inconsistent to her strong martial skill. On the continent, although the number of Martial Masters wasn't as pitifully small like the number of Magic Scholar, it still didn't surpass a thousand. Every country's Martial Master was a target that the imperial family roped in. It allowed the five great empires to live in harmony for the past ten years. Although, in the dark, the struggle between each country never ceased and these battles had mainly manifested in two ways. One of it was through duels between martial artists and the other was through big competitions between mages. No matter the quarrels between governments, the winners of the continental martial arts and mage tournaments, no matter which country they came from, were treated with respect. As long as they had exceptional performance records, they can receive their whole country's support and obtain other countries' acknowledgement. That kind of "not a battle yet fold people's weapons" competition was what every country wished to see. In the continent's history, the youngest Martial Master was at least 35 years old, but Feng Nu's and Nian Bing's were around the same age. If it was known there was such a young Martial Master, it would raise a big wave of commotion on the whole continent.

Feng Nu felt somewhat uneasy as her eyes met with Nian Bing's burning gaze. She lowered her head and said, "That day when I went to find you, I only wanted to tell you that the True Sun Knife's hardness is much greater than I had imagined. I will not be able to finish carving in one month. So, you will have to wait longer. I will need at least three months to carve the knife, and

that's just a conservative estimation. You're staying at the Mage Association, right? Wait there until I finish carving. I will go find you at that time. You should go back and properly study magic. After all, it's always good to have some abilities to protect yourself. In fact, as I look at your physique, if you cultivate martial skills, after a certain time, you can succeed. Magic is an ability that's useful during wars. Except, it can't be compared to martial skills. For example, just a moment ago, if I were to attack continuously, I'm afraid that you would already be unable to keep up. Of course, that's only my suggestion, that's all. If you simply just want to cultivate magic in order to be a better chef than that choice is obviously quite correct."

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, "Feng Nu, you have the ability to perceive powerful qi because what you cultivate is qi. Unlike you, I cultivate magic and it has its own mysteries. If my magic power and your qi are to be compared, I think, your qi might not necessary be able to restrain my magic. Mages only need time to chant the incantation. It's correct to say that I won't be able to withstand your stream of attacks, but if I was a Magic Scholar and I cast a rank 8 magic spell, even a Martial Master will not be able to contend against it. Thus, I always believe, the difference between mages and warriors mainly lies in distance. For a mage and a warrior with equivalent level in battle, if the distance was close, the warrior will certainly win; whereas if the distance was far, the mage will have time to chant his spell. I'm afraid that the warrior will be in a dangerous position. Naturally, the best combination will be a warrior and a mage coordinating; the warrior will hold the enemy in front at close range while the mage in the rear will cast a suitable magic spell. This is the way wars are fought, as well as battles. It's nothing more than a question of difference in distance. It's just as you said, I'm only a chef. As far as I'm concerned, studying magic is already enough. If I were to distract myself with studying martial skills, I will have achieved nothing in

the end.”

After hearing Nian Bing’s words, Feng Nu’s dark blue eyes revealed a trace of astonishment. “I didn’t think that your knowledge was actually so thorough. Then, I also don’t have much to say. It seems like today you didn’t prepare something delicious for me to try.” As she said that, a look of longing clearly could be seen in her eyes. She always had Nian Bing’s cooking on her mind.

Nian Bing helplessly spreaded out his hands and said, “Indeed... Once I heard you went to Pure Wind House to find me, I set out immediately and didn’t prepare anything. How about I go buy something right away?”

Feng Nu said with a smile, “No need. I was just joking with you. Although the food you make is very delicious, I really I don’t want to eat too much of it. Otherwise, later when we part ways, how can I be satisfied with other food? Quickly leave, return to the Mage Association.”

Feng Nu’s understanding touched Nian Bing’s heart. As for her words, it didn’t need much explanations. A few meaningful glances was all that was needed for the other party to clearly understand what the other needed most right now. They mutually understood each other, thus it gave a more relaxing atmosphere. This relaxing feeling increased his good impression of the mysterious Feng Nu. Ever since he arrived at Ice Snow City, after meeting four beauties, in his heart, Feng Nu held the first position without a doubt. Although she was somewhat mysterious, she had the least misgivings towards Nian Bing among the four. Nian Bing didn’t even hide his ability to use two kind of magic and when he’s

together with her, it felt so natural like he had removed some sort of mask. It's similar to how it felt between close relatives.

Chapter 21.3 – Fire God’s Left Hand

Feng Nu did not talk more and sent Nian Bing off to the entrance of the Shui Huo Metal Shop. “Okay, you should go. I’ll give you this. In Ice Snow City, if you encounter a problem you can’t settle, you only have to blow it, and I will definitely hurry to you in the shortest time possible.” She took out a small bamboo flute from her chest and handed it to Nian Bing. The flute was approximately three inches in length. Its whole body was dark red and on top were holes of various sizes. The carving design was in the shape of a phoenix. The style was simple, but the glossy luster confirmed its value. What’s more, it gave off a warm aura.

“Try and blow into it.” Feng Nu smiled slightly while saying.

Nian Bing brought the flute to his lips and blew gently. Though he could clearly perceive a sharp and penetrating sound coming out from the flute, no sound actually reached his ears.

Feng Nu said proudly, “This phoenix flute is extremely precious, keep it safe. This has been passed down through generations of my family. I only have the one so I’ll only lend it to you to temporarily use. When I’ve finished inlaying the gem into the True Sun Knife, you must return it to me. It’s not that I’m being stingy, but this belonged to my mother and is the only thing I can remember her by so I cannot easily give it to others. The sound produced by the phoenix flute can only be heard by our clan. Well, to clarify, only those who undergo a special cultivation can hear it.” Having said this, Feng Nu thought of her mother’s words on her deathbed. Her mother told her that only when she met someone she really liked, someone who could she entrust her whole life to, could she give the Phoenix Flute. Thinking of this, her delicate face that looked

like it could break by blowing on it could not help but flush red.

From the bamboo flute came a faintly sweet fragrance that made Nian Bing feel excited. “Feng Nu, I.....”

“Shh.” Feng Nu brought a finger to her lips. “Don’t say anything and go. We are friends; we should help one another. Remember, we’re only friends.”

Nian Bing’s mind went blank. It was like cold water had been splashed on his face, and he was immediately aroused from his stupor. He looked at Feng Nu’s stunning beauty. That’s right! They were only friends. What’s more, it was not the time for him to be off pursuing an intimate relationship.

He did not use the Snowstorm again. Nian Bing plodded on home to the Mage Association step by step. When he arrived back, lunch had already ended. On the road, he clutched tightly onto the Phoenix Flute, his mind was full of the images of Feng Nu. Perhaps it was love at first sight? Ever since Nian Bing came to Ice Snow City, all the events he experienced had left him tired. It was only in front of Feng Nu that his tired mind could loosen a bit. After he left Ice Snow City, he could forget Xue Jing, he could forget Luo Rou, and he could even forget the gentle Long Ling. But he knew that even after a very long period time, it would be very difficult to forget Feng Nu. Her long pink hair. Her blue clothes that hugged her stunning form. Those eyes blue as the sky. How could she not leave such a deep impression in his heart. ‘Feng Nu, oh Feng Nu. What sort of person are you after all? Clansmen, you spoke of your clansmen. Don’t tell me you are part of a special clan?’ His father once told him that at the end of the war, many ethnic groups

perished because they lost. But these ethnic groups had survivors who dispersed throughout the world. Due to mankind not having many distinct features, it was hard to tell them apart. Maybe, Feng Nu is one of the lost ethnicities.

“Nian Bing, you have returned.” A flat voice awoke Nian Bing from his thoughts. He raised his head to see Long Zhi wearing an azure Magic Scholar gown not too far off in front of him.

Nian Bing hurriedly calmed his expression and took a few steps forward. Respectfully he said, “Greetings, President.”

Long Zhi smiled slightly and said, “Liking cultivation is a good thing, but you mustn’t overwork and disregard your well being. Although, if everyone in the Association made progress like you, I wouldn’t have to worry.”

Nian Bing spoke indifferently, “President is praising me. Ever since Nian Bing started cultivating magic, this is the first time I’ve seen so many magic books. For me, this is the biggest treasure trove. How could one enter into such a treasure hold and return empty handed. It’s only that understanding the theoretical knowledge takes some time. Nian Bing started out late and must naturally step up his learning so that from now on, his cultivation can progress smoothly.”

Long Zhi nodded his head slightly. He said, “When you first started going to the library, I wasn’t too surprised. After all, any mage needs magic spells that are suited to them. What surprised me was that the first floor magic materials made you squander for days. From your foundation, it was enough for me to see that you

were a diamond in the rough. The library's first three floors are always completely open. Continue studying. If there is something you don't understand, just come find me. As for the matter with the Pure Wind House, there is no need for you to worry. My relationship with the owner of the Pure Wind House is very good. With me stepping in for you, they shouldn't bother you anymore. Since you want to cultivate, by all means, continue to do so. I heard Ling'er say that you already prepared to enter the library's second floor to study. Just like you, she is also an Ice Mage. From now on, please let her study the library materials with you. You can compare notes with each other. Especially in terms of magic control, you can give her a few pointers. You are peers of the same age, so associating should be comparatively easy. Letting her comprehend things herself, compared to me directly teaching her, should have better results."

Nian Bing's brows creased slightly. He was a dual element mage so he didn't only need to read the Ice materials. If Long Ling was with him, it would naturally be very troublesome. But Long Zhi was the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association President and Nian Bing had no way of rejecting his request. His heart tremored. He said, "President, that should be fine, but let Big Brother Shi Jiu come with us. If a male and a female were alone with each other, it would be somewhat inappropriate. If everyone studied and investigated together, the benefits should be much greater. On the first floor, I read in the book *A Detailed Explanation of Magic Foundation* that every type of magic is connected. Although Big Brother Shi Jiu is an earth mage, if he were to study together with us, the results should be even better."

Long Zhi's eyes exuded a hint of surprise. His daughter had a lot of sex appeal. He, of course, clearly knew this. He arranged for Long Ling and Nian Bing to study together in the library because

he wanted to create some opportunities for Nian Bing, but he never thought that he would take the initiative to abandon the opportunity. It couldn't be that he was not even slightly attracted to his daughter's appearance? Though he thought this in his mind, he said out loud, "You're thinking is very thoughtful. So now that has been arranged, you needn't worry about other things. If you need something, don't hesitate to speak with a servant. I will assign someone to bring food to the library every day. I hope that within this time, you will have some breakthroughs. Nian Bing, you must remember, magic power is the crux magic cultivation, and it is also the foundation to even higher level magic. Don't be overcome by spells and skills."

Long Zhi's words were simple, but it gave Nian Bing a sudden realization. That's right. Magic power is the true cornerstone in magic cultivation. His ice and fire source magic and other magic were not alike. Researching how to get these two extreme magic power to truly harmonize together is his biggest task. And for this problem, he could only go to the library to find out. "Many thanks for President's pointers, I will definitely endeavor to cultivate further." Towards Long Zhi, Nian Bing bowed before he headed towards the library.

Looking at Nian Bing's back, Long Zhi could not help but smile a little. When he was at his age, his magic cultivation was far off from his. He didn't know if Nian Bing would give him even greater surprises. That day, after Shi Jiu and Long Ling had returned, he confirmed that Nian Bing had once chopped wood at the Pure Wind House. This allowed Long Zhi's trust in him to grow. At least, this confirmed that Nian Bing had no relationship with the person the Ice and Snow Goddess Worshipper was looking for. In Long Zhi's eyes, Nian Bing was a genius mage who studied hard to progress. With such a talent, he naturally wanted to lure him in.

The next time Nian Bing went to the library, he directly ascended to the second floor. The second floor had records of rank 3 to 6 magic knowledge, as well as more profound magic explanations. What he needed the most was to commit to memory ice magic spells. Therefore, the first book he chose was a complete compilation of mid-rank ice magic spells.

He was halfway into a book when Shi Jiu and Long Ling stepped onto the stairs. Shi Jiu went up and proactively called out a greeting to Nian Bing. “Brother, we have arrived.”

Nian Bing put down the book in his hands and smiled slightly towards the two. He said, “Big Brother Shi Jiu, Ling’er, you’ve come to start reading magic books too.”

Shi Jiu said somewhat helplessly, “I really don’t know what master was thinking, wanting us to come and read books. These sort of mid-rank magic foundation is something we have already committed to memory. Nian Bing, do you have a good explanation?”

Nian Bing shrugged his shoulders, saying, “I’ve only just come on to the second floor and I’m still reading spells. Since President made you guys come, you should read as you please, there should be something helpful.

Long Ling’s warm and soft gaze settled on Nian Bing. She said, “Have you gone to see Jing Jing?”

Nian Bing shook his head, saying, “I don’t want to go see her. You know her character. If she sees me, she will only mock and ridicule me. It’s better to not see her.”

Chapter 22.1 – Scrolls And Magic Arrays

Long Ling sighed softly and said, “Although Jing Jing may have a bad temper, she’s a good person. You shouldn’t have any grudge against her. Nian Bing.....”

Nian Bing interrupted Long Ling’s speech, saying, “The President wanted us to compare notes on magic control cultivation methods. May I ask what you two usually do for magic control cultivation?”

Long Ling first stared blankly, then said, “Naturally, we use low rank magic then rely on our spiritual power to control the spell to the desired level. Don’t tell me you use a different method?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “Of course it’s not like that. Actually, magic control cultivation doesn’t have a particular trick to it. The main thing in cultivation is spiritual power. Relying only on magic control practice to cultivate spiritual powers would definitely not produce good results because the spiritual power isn’t going to receive enough stimulation. For example, when controlling your strongest magic, it will be very difficult to make it reach the level you desire. In the end, the spell will be used as a full frontal attack. Normally, you should already be able to use the magic you’ve learnt to its fullest extent and thus be able to control it. The reason why you are unable to control it, however, may not because your spiritual power is lacking, but because your spiritual power is not focused enough.

“Focus of the spirit?” Long Ling’s eyes lit up. She possessed a great gift in magic cultivation. Hearing Nian Bing’s simple pointer, she immediately understood many things. Pondering on his words,

she asked, “But how is it that you succeed in getting your spirit completely focused? This would require a specific method.”

Of course, Nian Bing could not tell her that he trained his spiritual power control by cutting firewood. Helplessly he said, “The method varies from person to person. To put it simply, when you concentrate your attention on observing the same thing, your spiritual power will aggregate. For this, you’ll want to try out different methods to find the one most suited to your cultivation.”

Long Ling contemplated and then said, “I get it.” From her chest, she took out a small, exquisite magic wand. She did not speak another word as she walked into a corner, sitting down with a look of complete focus as she concentrated on the gem of the wand.

Nian Bing silently praised her. Although this kind of direct observation was somewhat inferior to his woodcutting cultivation method, it was no doubt the most suitable method for Long Ling. However, spiritual power cultivation wasn’t something that can be completed in one morning and one night. He himself had needed eight years to reach his current level.

Shi Jiu looked at Long Ling who was sitting down at the side, staring at the precious stone in deep concentration. He couldn’t help but be at a loss. He hadn’t heard what Nian Bing said earlier. Right then, looking at Long Ling trying out what Nian Bing had said, he could not help but feel somewhat funny. Sitting by Nian Bing, he said in a low voice, “I heard master say that originally he wanted you and Ling’er to cultivate in the library alone, and that it was you who invited me?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly. In a low voice he said, “Big Brother, don’t misunderstand! I reckoned that we would be at the library for a long time. You can just relax and pursue your Ling’er while I peacefully read my books. I’m just giving you guys the opportunity to interact. How’s that? Aren’t I a good brother.”

Shi Jiu extended his thumb to Nian Bing, the expression of excitement in his eyes unmistakable. “Good brother, if you need something, do not hesitate to talk to Big Brother and I will definitely help you.”

Nian Bing gave a little smile and said, “Right now, there’s nothing I need. Big Brother, I’ll be reading books. Everything else, I won’t bother with.” Having said this, he grabbed a book and walked to another bookshelf to continue studying.

In the sea of books, time passed very quickly. After a few days, Shi Jiu was enduring the loneliness here to accompany Long Ling. But he was naturally lazy and didn’t hold much patience for cultivation; otherwise, he wouldn’t be approaching his thirties yet still continues to be stuck at the realm of an Advanced Mage. The days passed. Besides meal times when Long Ling and Nian Bing barely spoke to the other, the two were silent the entire time. Shi Jiu was wholly not suited to such a situation. On the third day, it became intolerable for him. Besides occasionally reading, he didn’t remain long in this place. Anyways, Nian Bing and Long Ling were like pieces of wood, and Shi Jiu placed great trust in Nian Bing. On the seventh day, he just didn’t come back and let the two cultivate alone in the library.

Nian Bing held a book in one hand and quickly condensed magic

power in the other. On a scroll, he continuously drew. This type of magic scroll was made out of special materials. On the surface, there was a layer of crushed precious stone powder. When using magic to draw, one could store magic inside the scroll and when needed, it could complete the spell in an instant, even without a chant. That day, when Nian Bing was confronting Feng Nu's attack, he threw out ten or so pieces of paper. Those were beginner magic scrolls he drew on the first floor. Rank 2 magic was drawn on ordinary paper, but past rank 4 magic, specialized scrolls would be needed. This white scroll was not comparable in quality, and as such, neither was the price. The cheapest scroll cost one gold coin and the most expensive scroll cost ten purple gold coins. The white scroll itself was not extremely costly, but if the surface needed magic, then the price would immediately multiply several times over. The scroll Nian Bing was using right now was the most ordinary scroll, bought at the price of one gold coin. Though the Mage Association gave its members not just a little preferential policy, the white scrolls had to be acquired with their own money. Nian Bing had always been interested in the use of magic scrolls. But after Feng Nu's place where he had relied on the scroll to save himself, his interest in scrolls simply bloomed. Having memorized the needed spells and reading the information he needed, he studied the drawing process along with the use of magic scrolls on the second floor. He had bought the white scrolls directly from the Association. He was an Association member, so they were twenty percent off. In only two days, Nian Bing had used more than ninety of a hundred single-use, low-level white scrolls, which was how he depleted half a month's worth of his salary. However, his luck was not that bad. Due to his magic control, his success rate at drawing magic scrolls was much higher than an ordinary mage. From over ninety scrolls, he had made thirty rank 4 scrolls, and even had six rank 5 scrolls and two rank 6 scrolls. He had reached the limit of his current ability.

“The last stroke.” Ice magic power suddenly condensed as Nian Bing pointed with a finger. At the scroll’s most crucial position, a chi sound resounded. The scroll flashed blue and immediately turned into ice powder. It was a bust as the scroll was discarded as ice powder.

The overuse of spiritual power made Nian Bing tired. He could not help but lean against the bookshelf. “The success rate of a Rank 6 magic scroll is really low. I just wasted another gold coin.”

“That’s already pretty good.” A sweet sounding voice came from behind Nian Bing. Nian Bing turned to look, only to see that Long Ling was already at his side from who knows when. Squatting down, Long Ling looked at the completed scrolls on the ground. She couldn’t help but smile slightly and say, “If every mage had a success rate as high as yours, our Mage Association would become the richest organization on the continent.”

Nian Bing looked blankly. He said, “In the books, it only says that success in drawing magic scrolls depends on the mage’s magic power, magic control, comprehension of magic, and the quality of the scroll. That said, I didn’t know what the baseline success rate is. Ling’er, is my success rate really that high?”

Long Ling smiled slightly and said, “Of course it’s very high. Ordinarily, mages can only draw magic scrolls for a magic spell two levels below their highest level of magic at a success rate of one to five percent, give or take. Using white scrolls cannot add to the magic strength of the scrolls and can only increase the success rate when drawing scrolls. Using the most expensive scrolls, the success rate would be around twenty percent. What’s more, is that

that type of scroll is very small and easily carried, thus the price is very high. Therefore, successfully drawn magic scrolls, even if it's only at rank 4, would fetch an extremely high price. For example, your rank 4 Snowstorm, would be priced at least fifty to one hundred gold coins. In total, you used a hundred scrolls to make over thirty rank 4 ice magic scrolls. This said, you will make a profit on these scrolls at least ten times. You asked if it was so amazing, right? In addition to your extremely high success rate, you used the most ordinary white scrolls to make rank 5 and rank 6 scrolls. Rank 6 magic should be the highest level you can reach and yet you can still successfully make scrolls of the same rank. Even if it was my father, he wouldn't be able to accomplish that. At every increase in rank, the price of the scroll increases five fold. So your rank 5 scrolls can be sold at about ten purple-gold coins, and your rank 6 scrolls can be sold at a high price of 200 purple-gold coins and up."

Nian Bing listened to Long Ling and couldn't help but smile and say, "Having said this, how can I not do well? Hehe, Ling'er, how did you know that I made rank 5 and rank 6 scrolls?"

Long Ling's pretty face flushed red. She said, "When you started to make scrolls, I started paying attention to you. Making magic scrolls is comparatively dangerous, I just hoped that you wouldn't destroy the library. I really didn't think that your magic control was much stronger than I had imagined. Maybe even an ordinary Magic Scholar could not compare to you, else it would be so easy to succeed in drawing magic scrolls."

Nian Bing smiled slightly, saying, "I have no use for this many scrolls. If you like, you can have a few. It's a pity my magic power isn't enough, otherwise I could've made higher level scrolls to use."

With a scroll, you can easily toss it out when you meet an enemy. Even if it's a high level martial artist, it wouldn't be very easy for them to evade/defend."

Long Ling giggled and then said, "You're right, but you should know that throwing scrolls is equivalent to throwing money! Speaking of scrolls, I recall that last time, in a moment of carelessness, Uncle Li De was surrounded by your Snowstorm. In order to not lose face, he used a rank 7 magic scroll that was made by my father to provide assistance. He drew it in front of me. If he had brought it outside, it could be sold for three thousand purple-gold coins at the very least. After you left, he didn't know how his heart could ache any more. For that scroll, he spent over two hundred purple-gold coins."

Nian Bing looked blankly at Long Ling and said, "Magic scrolls are really that pricey?"

Long Ling looked at Nian Bing with a monstrous expression. "You really haven't conventionally studied magic before. Magic scrolls are not only expensive, but were previously unavailable on the market. At one point, magic scrolls higher than rank 6 were about ten times more expensive. One rank 7 magic scroll can easily wreck city gates with no chance for defense. A rank 8 scroll, in the time it takes to blink, can decimate an army of a thousand soldiers. And a rank 9 scroll can release a magic power so mighty, it can almost destroy a whole corps of ten thousand people. Can you imagine how much money it takes to build/make a legion ten thousand strong? Rank 8 scrolls are very different magic, the price is at least ten thousand purple gold coins, and a rank 8 AOE attack magic scroll can be priced at fifty thousand purple-gold coins. As for rank 9 scrolls, they have never even had a price. Moreover, it's

been a long time since one has been seen. In the situation when my father is able to chant a very long spell, he can use rank 10 magic. He already tried to make a rank 9 scroll, but has never succeeded. In this area, he has already wasted more than a thousand purple gold coins on white scrolls.

Hearing Long Ling's words, Nian Bing suddenly understood that the main reason why magic scrolls were so expensive was because magic scrolls, even in the hands of a beginner mage, could unleash a devastating magic power. With just money, a beginning mage with ten or so scrolls could contend against a Magic Scholar. This is the advantage of the scroll. However, according to what Long Ling said, he could sell the scrolls he made for no small amount of money. If there came a time where he needed money, he would just have to make some.

“It's a pity my magic power is too low right now. The highest I can make is a rank 6 scroll. I would also only use a portion of all these scrolls. Ling'er, could you get the President to help me sell them?”

Long Ling smiled slightly. She said, “Sell? When Father sees this many scrolls, he would not be willing to part with them. He will definitely get you to stay. You should know, as a Mage Association, a large scroll reserve, during a battle with mages or a war, can effectively increase the battle capability of the Association by a huge margin. Even if it is only rank 4 magic scrolls, collecting a lot is very advantageous. Right now, people who can make scrolls like you are very rare. After all, the success rate in making scrolls is too low and in order to raise the success rate, normal people must use higher-grade white scrolls so the expenses are very large. This is good, I will act in place of my father to promise you that whatever

you need, the Association will offer free of charge. But if you make the scrolls, you will sell them at half market price to the Association. How many you want to keep is up to you. I reckon that with your present magic control, if you use the best paper, a rank 4 scroll's success rate should be eighty percent or higher. I suggest you make more high rank scrolls so that you can practice. Making scrolls for a long time has the greatest effect on increasing magic control. People like me who have a success rate of almost zero couldn't use such a costly method to train our magic control."

Chapter 22.2 – Scrolls And Magic Arrays

Nian Bing knew roughly how precious scrolls were. Smiling slightly, he said, “I accept your proposal. Anyway, the resources I used were given to me by the Association. Without the materials from the library, I would be unable to make the scrolls. It’s fine like this. All the scrolls I make, except the ones that I need, will be contributed to the Association. I won’t even take a penny. But I hope that the President will grant me some privileges and in exchange, if I ever need money, the association can just offer me a more limited amount. Is this okay?”

Long Ling was at a loss. “I, I haven’t misheard what you said, right? You don’t want money?”

Nian Bing let out a small laugh and said, “What would I do with all that money? It’s much too troublesome to carry it on my person, and what’s more, my expense aren’t that big.”

Long Ling cheered and suddenly embraced Nian Bing before she forcefully pressed a kiss onto his face. “This is so great, this really great. Nian Bing, as you know, because of the existence of the Ice Goddess Pagoda, we, the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association had no standing in the continent. The Association does not only have sparse magic experts, its reserves are also much smaller than every other Empire’s Association. In the eyes of the royal family of the Ice Moon Empire, the symbol of the empire is solely the Ice Goddess Pagoda. We do not amount to anything, so the allocated funds is pitifully small. Father is always troubled over this. I really did not know you were such a monster. You should know, even if father made low level scrolls, his success rate would be lower than yours. At least half of the Association’s expense is dependent on

father making scrolls.”

Nian Bing touched the spot where Long Ling kissed him and said in surprise, “That can’t be. An Empire’s Mage Association can actually be maintained like this?”

Long Ling said sadly, “In reality, this is how it is. Our Association and the other Empires’ Associations are different. Other empire associations are entirely supported by the Empire. In our case, the Ice Goddess Pagoda strength grows bigger and bigger while the Association continues to lose the acknowledgement of the Imperial Family. Our allocated funds are a mere pittance, basically just symbolic. Nian Bing! With your scrolls, the whole Association can improve. This is really too great. Thank you so much. Father can finally stop working so hard. Did you know? Father is fifty years old this year and Uncle Xue, Xue Jing’s father, is already over sixty years, but dad is much better than Uncle Xue in cultivation, but he looks older than Uncle Xue. Nian Bing, thank you, you are the Association’s hope! Just continue reading books, I will go tell Father the good news. Can I bring some of the scrolls you made?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “Of course you can, please choose whatever you wish.” Having known Long Ling for some days, this is the first he saw Long Ling in such a tizzy of excitement. This of course was not just because of the Mage Association, but more importantly, it was because of her father.

Long Ling snatched up a scroll from the ground with such happiness and excitement she did not look at its rank before she immediately ran off. In a blink, she had disappeared from the stairs.

Nian Bing looked at her fleeing figure and felt his face was warm. Muttering to himself, he said, “She really is such a cute girl! Scrolls are actually this great. En, the normal level ones I will leave with the Association and the higher grades I will keep for myself. If I accumulate a few scrolls, I can be very relaxed when I travel to the continent.”

He didn't continue to make scrolls. After over ten days, he had already finished reading basically everything he needed to know on the second floor. He only had one last thing he was interested in, and after he finished reading he would go to the third floor for a higher understanding of magic.

Casually, he picked up a book he had found earlier from the mound of scrolls and opened it slowly. The book was called, A Beginner's Explanation of Magic Arrays.

Magic arrays were made through special symbols and magic fluctuations, which were then connected to the magic elements of the heaven and earth. Its method of usage was fair and equal. Under certain circumstances, magic arrays were something every mage should understand, especially Advanced Mages, because the only reasonable use of a magic array was to completely bring out a mage's ability. Using the least energy, it can release their strongest power.

Having read just this section, Nian Bing's interest was immediately aroused. The reason why he chose this book was because of magic scroll making. The drawing techniques of magic scrolls was actually founded on magic arrays. Since this is the case,

if you can comprehend magic arrays, you may be able to make your own special magic scrolls. Like this, there would be no limit to the expansion of power.

The study of magic arrays is very mysterious . Even though Nian Bing was intelligent, upon seeing the complicated symbols, as well as the relationships between them. and their uses, he was somewhat at a loss. There weren't that many magic symbols, only about one hundred. Each had its own effect, but when two magic symbols form a new symbol, their new effect would be completely different. This change made Nian Bing's headache. A hundred plus symbols and their possible combinations that could produce new characters, effectively increasing the content many times over. In this sort of situation, how could he remember all of them?

The thick book with more than a thousand pages on magic arrays had quickly caused Nian Bing to be immersed within its pages. At this moment, he had even forgotten that he was actually a chef as the subtleties of magic had deeply intoxicated him. Magic was undoubtedly a mysterious thing. There was so much knowledge to be learned in comparison to other subjects.

“Nian Bing, could you pause for a moment?” The gentle voice awakened Nian Bing from his trance. He raised his head to look. He didn't know how long the Association President Long Zhi and Long Ling had been at his side. Hurriedly getting to his feet, he spoke in an embarrassed voice, “Sorry, President, I was entranced.”

Long Zhi smiled slightly and said, “Don't worry about it, this kind of focus is good. I've already heard about your matters from

Long Ling'er. Could you make a scroll for me to see right now? I really do not understand. Your magic power is not weak, but it is still far cry off from mine. Why is your success rate is so high?"

Nian Bing could only shrug his shoulders helplessly. He replied, "I don't have the answer to this problem. While I make one, as an authority in the magic world, maybe you can find out this question's crucial point. It's a pity. I've already used up my white scrolls."

"That's not a problem. I have some here." While saying this, Long Zhi pulled out a small scroll from his chest and gave it to Nian Bing. He said with a small smile, "This the most expensive kind of scroll, priced at ten purple-gold coins. It can greatly increase your scroll-making success rate. Try it."

When the three inch long, small scroll entered his hand, Nian Bing suddenly felt that it couldn't compare to the previous one gold white scrolls. A rich magic element spread throughout this scroll. Cautiously and solemnly , he opened the scroll. The white paper had a glossy sheen that glittered under the light. Nian Bing did not hesitate much as the allure of magic propelled him into action. He focused on his right hand as the surrounding air immediately turned cold. He did not immediately begin drawing on the scroll. Just like when he first chopped wood and observed it, he carefully observed this ten purple-gold coin scroll. His eyes lit up. He had found it, found the small chink in the energy waves.

Finally, after a few short breaths of observation, Nian Bing's right hand moved. His wrist seemed to snap off, as it flew to the paper and transformed. Ice element, condensed from magic power,

was used to draw on the narrow, small scroll. The speed was quick to the point that the strokes couldn't be seen clearly. A rank 5 Ice Wall was completed in a few short blinks. When Nian Bing's final point was on the scroll, a ring of blue light scattered away. The light scattered and flashed rapidly before suddenly vanishing. The rank 5 scroll was a success.

Long Zhi gasped. "Heavens! This is how you draw scrolls?"

Nian Bing awoke from his immersed state and raised his head to look at Long Zhi. He said with a little smile, "President, this white scroll is pretty good. The kind I used to use had a success of one out of ten. Look, this Ice Wall is quite good."

Long Zhi smiled bitterly. "Nian Bing, fortunately, I still haven't become so old that my eyesight has weakened. So that's why you can have such a high success rate. Do you know? Whenever I draw a magic scroll, it takes me at least an hour while you only take a few breaths. This really is a great difference! If I'm correct, you haven't been working with magic scrolls for long, but why are you so quick at drawing? Aren't you afraid of making a mistake? The magic array drawn on the scrolls must be very exact. Even if only a tiny error is made, the whole scroll will be ruined. Before, when Ling'er told me that you had already drawn one hundred scrolls, I did not dare to believe it. But right now, you have confirmed that you are a bonafide magic genius!"

Nian Bing smiled faintly. "I've already said this to Ling'er, but when cultivating magic with an aim to increase the accuracy and strength of your magic control, concentrating your spirit is the best method. Before I draw a scroll, I first go over the shape of the

entire magic array firmly in my mind, then by observing the white paper, I determine the best position for my hand. I then directly blend it in with the magic aura of the white scroll. As such, naturally it can be done with just one step. When your spiritual power is completely concentrated, there's no way your scroll can have any mistake whatsoever. Even though I wasted those white scrolls previously, it was only because my magic power did not combine together well at the crucial moment." Of course he couldn't tell Long Zhi that by practicing knife arts for so many years, his right hand's accuracy was extremely high and so could grasp the drawing. Long Zhi, even if he wanted to draw scrolls well, probably wouldn't waste eight years cutting vegetables or chopping firewood.

Long Zhi let out a long sigh while facing the sky. "Genius, a genius. Nian Bing, in my whole life, the best decision I made was to marry Ling'er mother. The second was may probably be letting you into the Association. I officially declare that from now on, you will officially become an Association Elder and enjoy all the authority that comes with it. Anything you need, you can rely on the special badge that will allow you to extract funds from the resources of any branch."

Nian Bing had already predicted what Long Zhi would say. After all, magic scrolls were very important to an Association, especially since the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association was in such a predicament. The thing they needed most was someone like him. If Long Zhi didn't rope him in, it would be strange.

"Since it's like this, if Nian Bing refused, it would be impolite. President, I also have a statement. From now on, every scroll I make except the ones I need will all be given back to the

Association. I only hope that the Association can furnish me with high-quality white scrolls to the best of its ability. This way, my success rate will be even higher. It's just a pity that my present magic power is still so weak. If I could make some rank 7 and 8 scrolls, it would be even more advantageous to the Association."

Long Zhi smiled softly and said, "There is time. You can't rush magic cultivation. You also don't need to hurry the process of drawing scrolls. First, just learn everything you need to know. Just relax. If there's anything you need, the Association will completely provide you with the highest quality white scrolls. Of course, I hope you can make more rank 5 and 6 scrolls."

Nian Bing thought silently, 'With the ability to make magic scrolls, I could establish myself in the Association. Too bad the Mage Association's strength is so much lower than the Ice Goddess Pagoda. I only need to do some instigating and I may be able to spark conflict between the Association and Ice Goddess Pagoda. Even if it's only in secret, it should be very advantageous towards my actions from now on.'

Long Zhi was in a fantastic mood. He had wanted to invite Nian Bing to eat a meal at the Pure Wind House together, but the invitation was evaded by Nian Bing with the reason he wanted to continue studying magic arrays. Indeed, in regards to what Nian Bing said, there was nothing more important than studying magic arrays, because there were some advantageous things he read pertaining to his cultivation of ice and fire source in A Detailed Explanation of Magic Arrays.

Time passed, day by day. Upon reaching the thousandth page,

Nian Bing had used up seven days to completely finish reading. But, he didn't just read, he even dedicated time to comprehension. He didn't study the changes in these symbols after combinations occurred, he instead focused on the original one hundred. He comprehended each and every one of their special characteristics. When he studied, he also comprehended that although combining symbols was life, the foundation of the one hundred odd symbols were death. These combined characters exhibited special properties and had differences born from the effects of the original symbols. Therefore, he only needed to thoroughly understand the foundation symbols, clearly understand the laws that governed the transformation, and all of the basic knowledge of magic arrays.

Chapter 23.1 – The Scroll Of Fusion Magic

As Nian Bing closed the book, he recalled the first thing Cha Ji had told him: practice cooking for ten years, comprehend cooking for ten years. Yes, this sentence could be applied to any other domain. The word comprehension, made him see magic arrays in a whole new way. Probably, an ordinary person could study for ten years and not reach his level of comprehension.

As usual, Long Ling accompanied Nian Bing while she cultivated her spirit force just as Nian Bing had taught. But at this moment, she hadn't focused on cultivating because Long Zhi had given her a very important task: to manage Nian Bing's everyday life and satisfy his every need. She hadn't cultivated for some time, so she could look after Nian Bing.

“Are you doing reading?” Pulled in by his presence, Long Ling raised her head to look at Nian Bing, who had stood up.

Nian Bing smiled slightly and nodded his head. He said, “I think that we can go to the third floor now. Although I have no way of utilizing the information from there, I'm hoping to find a few things in particular. If I can employ them into my magic scrolls, they will possess special characteristics not found in any other scrolls.”

Long Ling could not believe what Nian Bing was saying. “So you're saying that you can improve magic scrolls? But the magic scroll making method has been passed down for over a thousand years, and there hasn't been anyone who could make any changes!”

Nian Bing chuckled, then said, “That is because our predecessors lacked the innovation to do so. I think that I should be able to do it. Although I’ve just started learning the art of magic scrolls, I’m confident in my ability to succeed, given a little bit more time to further my research.” He had already understood much from his knowledge of magic arrays, but application and theory are completely different. Right now, even if he hadn’t seen magic scroll production methods, he could already guess the higher levels of magic scroll drawing and production theory. This can be attributed to the principle of comprehension.

Based on Long Ling’s expression, it seemed she remained skeptical of him. Nian Bing bent down to pick up a piece of paper from the ground. Yes, a magic symbol was drawn on the paper. He passed the paper to Long Ling and said, “What do you see on this paper?”

Long Ling took the white paper and saw a few uncomplicated symbols. Her eyebrows creased, and she said, “There seems to be a scroll drawn here, however, from the degree of complexity, it should be a rank 2 scroll! What is the purpose of this?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “What you said is correct. This is a scroll, a low-level magic scroll. However, the rest of your words were wrong. This isn’t a rank 2 magic scroll; it’s only a rank 1. Don’t be surprised; whether or not it is a rank 1 magic scroll, it is obviously complex. There is a reason for the complexity. Take a look.” Having said this, he took the scroll from Long Ling’s hand and waved it. Under the stimulation of light blue magic, the white paper disappeared in the blink of an eye. An ice cone appeared in mid-air and suddenly homed in on Long Ling. Naturally, a rank 1

magic attack could not pose any harm to Long Ling. Long Ling raised a hand and sent out an identical ice cone. Common sense would dictate that the two ice cones would dissolve into powder upon impact. Why did Nian Bing do show a common thing with a predictable outcome?

As expected, the two identical ice cones collided and ice powder came out. Long Ling thought it was over already, but from the ice powder, an ice blade suddenly appeared. In a flash, it had already come slashing at her face.

Long Ling let out a surprised sound. At this time, it was too late for her to use magic. She could only try to dodge. Nian Bing smiled slightly and waved his hand. The ice blade flew in an arc and landed onto his palm. “How was it? Do you finally understand?”

Long Ling looked at Nian Bing, and gradually recovered from her shock. “This, this is?”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “This is the results of my research. On the surface, it certainly appears to be a single rank 1 spell scroll, but two magics – the ice cone and ice blade – are actually combined in the scroll. One is a rank 1 spell, and the other is a rank 2 spell. If you were distracted by the rank 1 ice cone, you would be injured by the rank 2 magic that follows. To fully display this, I wanted to prove the theory before you. Admittedly, the knowledge passed on by the previous generations are a treasure, but if we aren’t any more innovative, our will not progress from the past. That is why I am researching the method of making magic arrays, which is very similar to magic scrolls. My knowledge is yet undeveloped, but you can imagine that if I could combine a rank 6 and a rank 5 magic in a

scroll, it may be formidable enough to overpower even a Magic Scholar.

Long Ling stared wide-eyed at Nian Bing. She could not at all comprehend how the mind of the youth in front of her worked. In over a thousand years, this was the first time a person had the courage to harbor such thoughts. This was the first time this kind of research had emerged. Nian Bing was just a Great Mage, but his accomplishments did not pale in comparison to a Magic Scholar. So long as his research was successful, inevitably, the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association's position on the continent would improve enormously.

“Nian Bing, how did you do it? You actually succeeded.” Long Ling gazed meaningfully at Nian Bing. After all, all girls, no matter the type, would always be attracted to a successful man.

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “Actually, this is nothing. Come on; let's go to the third level. Once I perfect this research, I will teach you how to make combined scrolls. It's just a pity that this kind of scroll has major problems in its production. It has only one more word than a normal scroll, but even I am only capable of making the one I just showed you. Higher ranked of magic will require an even greater spirit force and magic power to support it. However, I have always thought that there would be more theories and principles that will help me solved it. Right now, I merely forced two magic spells onto a scroll. If I could get them to integrate, then the results would be on an entirely different level. You can keep the scrolls on the ground and give them to your father. This time, I only made ten rank 5 magic scrolls, and four rank 6. On the third level, I think I'll need to focus to progress in my study of magic arrays. Once I have a better method, I will

continue to make more scrolls.” While saying this, he made his way up to the third floor of the library.

Naturally, Nian Bing did not say all of his thoughts out loud. Actually, he could make even higher level fusion magic scrolls right now. He had used white paper to test all kinds of fusion techniques. The strength of the magic was different, but the principle was the same. As long as it was possible to succeed with low level magic, it would definitely work with high level magic.

When Nian Bing’s figure disappeared around the corner of the stairs, Long Ling sat on the ground dispiritedly. Looking at each and every one of the book shelves before her, she said to herself: “Why? Why can he see life from these dead books, and I can’t? What magic genius. Before him, I am but a mere child.” She faintly felt that not too long in the future, Nian Bing would definitely cause great tremors in the magic world. At that time, he would be an immortalised existence. As for herself, she would be the first to witness the appearance of this person.

Nian Bing’s research was exceedingly difficult. Toiling hard under his own demands, he hadn’t left for a month since he entered. When he was tired, he would use the meditation method to rest and recover his spirit, before immediately continuing his research and studies. The collection of magic knowledge on the third floor was much larger than he had imagined. Nian Bing first embedded the memory of all the incantations in his mind. Afterwards, he began to research magic arrays, followed by scroll making. Scrolls were, after all, just extras. Even if he made many scrolls, they could all be used in a day. They were far from being able to compare with his own strength. In terms of magic scrolls, actually, only weak people would rely on them. The truly strong

individuals would disdain those that did so. Thus, he simply worked hard at his research, because magic arrays could possibly be the key to opening up the secrets of his ice and fire magic source. The secrets of the ice and fire magic source were truly Nian Bing's greatest interest.

While continuing to research, Nian Bing didn't know that Long Zhi, in order to support his research, had already given an order to blockade the entire library. Except for Long Ling, who would give him food and attend to his daily needs, other people were unable to enter at all. This order was issued by Long Zhi when he found out about Nian Bing's research on magic fusion. When he issued the order, he had made the firm resolution to not spare any expense to ensure Nian Bing wasn't interrupted during his work. He didn't want to for just his person to stay, but rather to get his heart to stay. If that happened, the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association could become even stronger.

The third floor of the library was obviously unlike the first or second floors. The first and second floor had tens of book shelves each, but the third floor only had four. Every bookshelf, however, had hundreds of books per shelf, and the vast majority of books appeared to be very old. Every class of magic incantation, from rank 6 large area magic spells to rank 9 single target magic spells, were readily available. Although he couldn't use them right now, he still carefully memorized all of it.

"Nian Bing." Long Ling's voice rang out, waking Nian Bing from his research. He did not even know how many days he had spent on the third floor of the library.

“Ling’er, what’s up? You don’t seem to be visiting much these days.” Nian Bing put down the book in his hand and smiled while talking.

Long Ling smiled slightly, saying, “It isn’t that I haven’t come by less frequently, it’s that you are too focused, and haven’t noticed me at all.”

Nian Bing gave a sheepish smile. “Probably. Since I’ve entered the library, I’ve paid little attention to anything else. Ling’er, did you need me for something?” He knew if there wasn’t any special matter, Long Ling wouldn’t have interrupted him.

Long Ling smiled slightly and said, “Naturally, I did. There is someone who came to the Association looking for you. Do you want to see them?”

Nian Bing went black. “Looking for me? Who could it be!” Don’t tell me it was Xue Jing or Feng Nu? It couldn’t be that guy, Yan Feng.

From Nian Bing’s grimace, Long Ling got an idea of what he was thinking. With a small smile, she said, “Relax, it isn’t Yan Feng. Although he did come by, Father told him that you were in closed meditation in order to send him away, and he hasn’t returned since. Anyway, it seems it may still cause problems if a man is pretty, hehe.”

Nian Bing said with ill humor, “Don’t use such a word to describe me. Of course, if you want to use handsome, suave, masculine, and

the like, then I wouldn't oppose it."

Long Ling stuck out her tongue at Nian Bing. "Who do you think is beautiful. Rou'er is the one looking for you, but I don't know what for."

Luo Rou? Nian Bing remembered that wise and exceedingly beautiful girl, as well as their ongoing bet. It looks like a month has passed since he entered the library. "Since a beautiful and intelligent girl has come to pay a visit, how can I not see her?" Nian Bing asked himself if he had left any gaps in his cover story. The wise girl should not have been able to discover anything about his real identity.

Long Ling looked at Nian Bing, her gaze full of a hidden bitterness. "Rou'er is already engaged. You have no chance."

Nian Bing huffed a laugh. He said, "Quickly, go and ask her to enter. Relax, I am a lowly person, how could I have such presumptuous thoughts?"

'Are you really a lowly person?' thought Long Ling, a thread of doubt rising. She did not say anything more and turned to leave. In just a moment, the sound footsteps returned, Luo Rou, clad in a pure white cheongsam, entered with Long Ling. The white clothes set off her blue hair. When paired with her intelligent eyes, her figure made people suffused with a pure feeling. Right now, compared to the splendid attire she wore that day, Luo Rou had a more simple and elegant sense of beauty.

Luo Rou took a look at Nian Bing, and couldn't help but be shocked. Turning her head to the side to look at Long Ling, she asked, "Ling'er, is this Nian Bing?"

Long Ling smiled, saying, "How couldn't it be him? Just one month has passed, but you can't even recognize him?"

Nian Bing subconsciously looked at his person and discovered that the magic gown he was wearing had long been covered in creases. His body emitted an unpleasant scent and when he touched his face, he realized that his facial hair had begun to grow quite long. It's not a surprise that Luo Rou couldn't recognize him. When he was studying magic, he really had forgotten everything else. Embarrassed, he said, "Sorry, Miss Luo Rou, for letting you see such a laughable sight. I feel very dejected."

Luo Rou covered her mouth as she laughed quietly. She said, "It's not that big of a deal. Moreover, you look haggard. It seems that you've been working very hard recently!"

Long Ling said, "He hasn't been working very hard; he's been working extremely hard. I don't understand how to support him when he's working this hard. There may come a time, I'm afraid, I will step over his withered corpse. He won't hear what anyone says to him. It's like those magic books have become his wife."

Nian Bing smiled bitterly. "Don't speak so cuttingly about me, could the gracious Rou'er excuse this one to let me clean up for a bit?"

Luo Rou laughed slightly, saying, “Cleaning up doesn’t matter, as long as you still remember our deal.”

Nian Bing’s eyebrows creased slightly and said, “Did you really find something?”

Chapter 23.2 – The Scroll Of Fusion Magic

Luo Rou spoke with meaning, “Of course. Even if I didn’t find anything, the Wise Girl is a person who abides to her promises. We had already talked about this together. Ling’er, I’m sorry, but this is a private matter I need to discuss with him alone.”

If this was requested to Xue Jing instead of Long Ling, maybe Xue Jing would have tried to ask and get to the bottom of the matter. However, this was Ling’er whose nature was sweet and gentle. Ling’er gently nodded and said, “Then, I’ll leave. Nian Bing, you should go to living quarters and clear things up. Oh! That’s right! Father originally wanted you move you to the Elder’s residence, but you just kept staying here the whole time so your rooms haven’t been switched yet. He said the switch would be made once you’re done researching in the library.”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “It doesn’t matter; those are simply superfluous matters. Miss Luo Rou, after you.”

Nian Bing led Luo Rou out. It had been a month since he came out of the library. Ling’er didn’t follow; she just left after she talked to them.

Although he didn’t return for a while, his dorm room was still fresh and cool. By reflex, he checked the magic seal he left behind and made sure that no one had trespassed and the thing he had hidden was still in its place. When he was satisfied that nothing had been touched, he invited Luo Rou in. “Please take a seat first. I’ll go clean and tidy myself.”

How did it feel to not take a bath or a shower for a full month? Nian Bing finally learned that making himself clean and presentable after one month of no showering took him at least two hours. He inwardly vowed to himself that he will not repeat this kind of shameful lifestyle in the future. He would lose face in front of all the beautiful women. Nobody would be happy to face beautiful women in a state like this.

Nian Bing skillfully used his Morning Dew Knife to shave his beard and then changed into thick cotton clothes before he walked out of the bathroom.

Luo Rou, who waited for two hours, didn't seem impatient at all. Upon she looked at Nian Bing, her eyes couldn't help reveal a trace of astonishment. When compared to before, Nian Bing now wore normal cotton clothes and his body exuded a fragrant odor after taking a bath. With his long blonde hair neat and perfectly combed, he looked like a completely different person. Although Nian Bing didn't practice martial arts, his slender body had broad shoulders, which was complemented with his handsome features. As the saying went, "Looks can kill". Towards the confident and strong, Luo Rou's heart couldn't stop palpitating.

Nian Bing went and sat next to Luo Rou on the couch. He let out a sigh before talking, "So refreshing! Miss Luo Rou, what do you want to talk about? If you came here to concede, may I ask you for a favor?"

Although Luo Rou forgot her manners for a moment, she had recovered quickly. She faintly smiled and said, "That's not it. I just came to collect the due rewards for my victory for our bet."

Nian Bing leaned on the armrest of the sofa and looked serenely at Luo Rou. He signaled her to continue as he said, “I would like to hear what our Wise Girl had been able unearth from her investigation.”

Luo Rou smiled with confidence as she stood up and walked to the center of room with her back facing Nian Bing. “Magic Reaper, shouldn’t these words be enough?”

Hearing the two words, Magic Reaper, Nian Bing almost jumped off the couch. His heart rate accelerated and, although, he already thought very highly of Luo Rou, he still didn’t expected that her investigations would lead her to this point. After a few seconds of silence, he forced his tone of voice to be as unperturbed as possible, “Can you tell me the reason?”

Luo Rou turned around and smiled as she looked at Nian Bing. Her eyes flickering with wisdom and farsight. “There are a lot of reasons why just these two words will suffice. I have to acknowledge that you as the greatest opponent I have ever encountered. Even in this situation, you can still keep your calm. This is already proof that you are certainly not a simple person. At first, I also didn’t expected that you can be a killer, but as I investigated at the Pure Wind House, I realized that you are rarely present in the firewood house late at night which raised my suspicions. So, I dared to make an outrageous hypothesis and after careful deductions, I’m almost certain that you are the Magic Reaper who killed Manager Liao.”

At this moment, Nian Bing’s mood was now truly unperturbed

because, as he thought about it, even if Luo Rou guessed everything right, the facts that she came to find him by herself and didn't talk about that matter to another, made it very clear that he still have a certain leeway. "Please continue."

Luo Rou faintly smiled before continuing, "First of all, I have asked Jingjing how she got acquainted with you. After carefully listening to her, I understood clearly that you two got acquainted because of Manager Liao. Furthermore, you were already extremely insulted by him at that time. That was the origin of your hatred and your motive."

Nian Bing smiled with indifference and said, "Manager Liao is known as a mangy dog. Excluding me, there should be many who had a deeper enmity and hatred towards him. Just basing your point on opinions, you're accusing me of being the Magic Reaper? That's very biased on your part."

Luo Rou smiled and continued, "Of course, it's not just based on that point. Later that night, Manager Liao met his death. At that time, you didn't have any alibi. I asked Jingjing and Ling'er, but you were neither present at Pure Wind House nor were you in the Mage Association. To be exact, after you left the Mage Association, and before you returned to Pure Wind House, Manager was disposed off. In addition, according to my investigation, the real cause of Manager Liao's death was from ice magic. When the Ice and Snow Goddess's Worshipper came to question, all the Ice Mages in the Association had an alibi at the time of the murder. I heard from Ling'er that only you have an extremely strong magic control while possessing the strength of a Great Mage. You have enough ability to kill Third Manager Liao. By combining all these points, in addition to my intuition, I am extremely certain that you

are the Magic Reaper who killed Manager Liao. Without a doubt, you also had an accomplice who is a fire mage. As for who he is, I just couldn't find any clues."

Nian Bing faintly smiled and spoke, "In the end, Wise Girl is not that impressive. Don't you feel that these reasons are very far-fetched? Many of these reasons stemmed from your own opinion. By basing your arguments on your subjectivity, you are unable to give a valid proof that I'm the Magic Reaper. Besides, President Long could also investigate all those things, but he already investigated about me."

Luo Rou looked at the dripping water and avoided looking at Nian Bing. Her eyes couldn't hide the trace of hesitation. "That's right, these are all my conjectures. I didn't have any witness or evidences. However, my intuition tells me that you are the Magic Reaper."

Nian Bing faintly smiled and continued, "You have no choice but to admit defeat. Miss Luo Rou, you are very intelligent, but you lost our bet."

Luo Rou's brows creased as she asked, "Could it be you simply refuse to admit that you're the Magic Reaper? You can rest assured since Manager Liao isn't someone known for his goodness. As for you admitting your true identity as the Magic Reaper, I won't force you in any way. For this matter, I swear to not tell anyone else."

Nian Bing shook his head and said, "I never felt anxious about this. First of all, I trust Miss Wise Girl. Next, even if I said anything, I'm afraid that no one will believe it. Even if President

Long Zhi knew that as the truth, he certainly will absolve me. When you investigated about me, Ling'er might have already told you that I am currently the Association's most important asset. Honestly speaking, although your conjectures lack evidence, it is still correct. That's right, I am the Magic Reaper who killed Manager Liao. I never leave loose ends when I handle matters. Although your conjectures were correct, you are unable to prove it."

Luo Rou smiled as her eyes gave a lovable and touching splendor. "That's great! The Magic Reaper was really you. Right now, you just admit it. Should we think about how to fulfill our bet?"

Nian Bing also smiled, "Surely not. I only confirmed your guess, but you still lost the bet from lack of evidences."

Luo Rou's expression slightly changed, "What do you mean? Just because I didn't have any evidence, I lost? Our bet is about guessing your profession, and I already guess it right. As a man, you cannot act so shamelessly!"

Nian Bing laughed, "You're joking! No matter my gender, that kind of shameless act is still beneath me. A win is a win, and a lost is a lost. I understand the concept of 'if you agree to a bet, you must be prepared to lose'. The reason why I said you lost is because your guess on my profession is wrong. I'm not an assassin by profession. It was just on a whim that I felt Manager was an eyesore. Of course, my profession is also not a mage."

Luo Rou was completely dumbfounded. From Nian Bing's look, she didn't see any signs of him lying and his enormous confidence

wasn't something that could be faked. "No way! I don't believe it. I really don't believe it. If you are not a full-time mage or an assassin, then how can you be so successful? You are the youngest Great Mage!"

From Nian Bing's eyes, there was a brilliance that terrified people as he indifferently said, "It's time we should settle this bet. Miss Luo Rou, I will use actions to let you know what my real profession is. Please follow me." As he spoke, he turned and walked towards the door.

He barely moved when a knock suddenly sounded on his door. Nian Bing opened the door and saw a charming Ling'er holding a brand new ice mage's gown in her hands. She looked at Nian Bing and couldn't repress a smile. "How was your chat together? I bring this for you to change into."

Nian Bing took the gown and saw Ling'er's gentle gaze. His heart couldn't help but slightly tremble. If he were to marry such a wife, it also could be considered fortunate. The idea appeared as fast as it disappeared. He slightly hesitated before resuming to his normal bearing. "We're already done speaking and are already preparing to go out. Ling'er, you should also come with us."

Ling'er faintly smiled and said, "Me? Won't I be disturbing you two?"

Nian Bing shook his head and replied, "Of course not. We are all friends. You wait for a moment, I'll go change clothes."

It took a while, during that time, Nian Bing went to the bathroom once more to change into his ice mage gown. When he came back, Ling'er saw that Nian Bing had returned to his handsome self and smiled kindly. Then she stood quietly next to Luo Rou with her head lowered, and seemed like she was thinking about something. "Pretty ladies, we can go now."

Ling'er curiously asked, "Where are we going?"

Nian Bing mysteriously smiled and replied, "We're going someplace I know. Ling'er, you don't want to know what I do in life?"

Ling'er blanked and asked, "You? Aren't you a mage? Don't tell me you still have side occupation?"

Nian Bing shook his head and continued, "No, you're wrong. Being a mage is my side occupation. Miss Ling'er and Miss Luo'er, let's go!"

Luo Rou heard Nian Bing calling her Luo'er for the first time, and it gave birth to a strange feeling in her heart. She raised her head and glance at him before saying, "Good, let's me see how you will prove it to me. Let us go."

After they walked out of the Mage Association, Luo Rou asked, "Are we going somewhere near or far? Where do you plan to take us?"

Nian Bing was distracted all of a sudden before he said, “It’s far as it’s located in the city’s center.”

Luo Rou looked at Nian Bing with widened eyes as she said, “You’re not thinking about making us walk all the way there! Hey! We are ladies. I’ll take you there.” As she finished speaking, she walked to the street and beckoned someone with her hand. Nian Bing followed after her and looked at where she was waving her hands to. He only saw a luxurious carriage quickly being pulled by four tall white stallions approaching them. Seeing this he remembered about the past events. That’s right, she was from a grand family, the Earl’s daughter. She should have a carriage to bring her everywhere and avoid walking around.

Luo Rou turned around and said, “Let’s go in the carriage. I really can’t make sense out of what kind of person you really are in the end.”

Hearing her strange words, Nian Bing simply smiled slightly as the three of them went into the carriage.

There was a faint fragrant emitting from inside the carriage, the cushions were very soft and comfortable. Luo Rou said to Nian Bing, “Just give the coachman the specific directions and address of the place you want to bring us.”

Nian Bing replied with a faint smile, “First, go to the center of the city. When we get there, you will naturally know.”

The carriage’s speed was very fast because on it was the emblem

of the Earl's house. So when people saw it, they all made way for the carriage. There was almost nothing that could delay the traveling speed of this carriage. It only took an hour for Nian Bing and the rest to reach the most bustling district in the centermost of the city.

During the whole journey, Nian Bing didn't say a word. He only sat down to rest with his eyes closed. Ling'er discovered with amazement that surprisingly, he was meditating. Inexplicably, she felt a pang of pain as she knew how tired he was these past few days.

"Hey! Wake up." Luo Rou pushed resentfully at the closed-eyed Nian Bing.

Nian Bing opened his eyes and, then lifted the curtain of the carriage to look outside before saying, "Good. Just stop here. Let's get out of the carriage."

Even if Luo Rou was intelligent, right now, she wrecked her brains but still had no idea what Nian Bing had planned. Her brows creased before she went out of the carriage, following Ling'er. She looked at her surrounding which was main street in the center of Ice and Snow City.

Nian Bing pointed at the most conspicuous signboard and said, "Let's go. This is our destination."

Long Ling and Luo Rou was very familiar with that signboard as it was the signboard of the most famous restaurant in the city: The

Pure Wind House.

Luo Rou's expression was not good as she looked at Nian Bing. "Are you telling me that your profession is a woodcutter? If that is such the case, I think I don't need to go in. Abiding to the condition of the bet with people like you, it makes me feel like i'm losing face."

Nian Bing looked straight at Luo Rou's eyes without yielding. Both of them had blue eyes, but each carried a different radiance. As they faced each other, Luo Rou's spirit force naturally couldn't compete with Nian Bing who cultivate magic and she was very quickly defeated. "Hey! What's going on? Tell me!"

Chapter 24.1 – Nine Mysterious Green Dragons Concealed In Clouds Of Ice

Nian Bing smiled indifferently and said, “Miss Rou’er, you only need to remember the condition when you lose to me. Come, let’s go in.”

After donning his mage’s gown, Nian Bing did not look like his previous self. The waiters and waitresses welcoming the guests at the door absolutely didn’t recognize him, but they did recognize Long Ling and Luo Rou. They hurriedly went to them and respectfully said, “Have the two ladies come to find our miss?”

Long Ling blanked for a moment, then she glanced at Nian Bing. Nian Bing said, “You can also call Miss Xue Jing here. I should take this opportunity to settle everything at once and also clear all the misunderstandings. Thus she won’t continue to misunderstand me.”

Long Ling nodded and said, “Then let’s go in.” The three of them followed the waiter into Pure Wind House lounge. Compared to the Grand Pavilion, the lounge here was many times smaller. However, the decoration was much more unique. Carved wood and ornaments could be seen everywhere. Without exception, all the tables were made of a special sculpted wood. A faint fragrance enveloped the whole lounge as soft music sounded from behind a curtain. The beautiful notes of the zither rang out softly, with the a single trace of discord.

Nian Bing praised the musician in his heart. It was his first time coming into the lounge. In his mind, Pure Wind House hadn’t

attained success through pure luck. Every little detail, from the arrangements and the decorations to the overall atmosphere was the result of careful deliberations.

Nian Bing asked the waiter, “May I trouble you to invite Miss Xue Jing here? We came to find her for something.”

The waiter glanced doubtfully at Nian Bing. At this moment, he realized that this man seemed quite familiar. However, he didn’t remember where he could have seen him before. He had seen Nian Bing when he had still been chopping wood. However, clothes indeed make the man. How could the Nian Bing of before compare to the him right now? The waiter looked at Long Ling and Luo Rou, uncertain what to do. Luo Rou nodded to him and said, “Go tell Jing Jing that Ling’er and I have come, and tell her to come quickly.”

Luo Rou couldn’t wait to see what kind of cheap tricks Nian Bing had planned. Watching Nian Bing act with such self-confidence, she was suddenly truly looking forward to what he had to show. There weren’t many things that could make her excited in Ice and Snow City. She was used to planning and strategizing, and she could stage victory from thousands of miles away. Ever since Nian Bing had entered her life, she had encountered more and more surprises. There were rarely any dull moments, from the ice cream cake she had received on her birthday to her investigation of the Magic Reaper’s case. It made her increasingly curious about Nian Bing. Just when she thought that she knew everything about him, he suddenly told her that what she thought she knew was false. At this moment, her mood was extremely complicated, and she was itching to know the answer.

The waiter left, and Nian Bing pulled a chair and sat down. Then, with a gesture, he invited the two girls to do the same. Smiling, he asked, “What is it? Don’t you two want to sit down for a bit?”

Long Ling faintly smiled before replying, “We sat through the entire journey. I’ll just stand for a moment. I once heard Mother said that, if you’re a girl, always sitting will affect your height.”

Luo Rou walked to Nian Bing’s side. She bent down and whispered into his ear, “Jing Jing is going to come out soon. Have you thought of a way to resolve your conflict?”

Nian Bing had a calm smile and said, “Of course I’ve thought about it. Miss Wise Girl, I heard you are already engaged. Being so close to me, aren’t you afraid of people misunderstanding?”

Luo Rou was startled. Her gaze landed on Long Ling who was at the side. “What did you say to him? Ah ha! Ling’er, you’re not jealous, are you?”

Hearing her words, Long Ling’s charming face furiously blushed. “Rou’er, stop saying nonsense! Nian Bing and I are only friends. How can I be jealous? I only told him the truth to prevent him from falling into an unwanted situation.”

Nian Bing laughed and said, “Impossible, impossible! I have always been someone who knows his place. How can Ling’er misunderstand me like this?”

Long Ling glanced at him blankly, “I misunderstood you? I’m afraid that’s not right. I clearly remember someone giving a birthday present, and not letting anyone else but the birthday girl have a bite of it!” The way she said it, it looked exactly as if she was pouting in front of her boyfriend. In her beautiful eyes, waves seemed to surge. All the waiters who saw her gawked stupidly in place.

In his heart, Nian Bing inwardly said to himself, ‘It looks like Long Ling had a somewhat good impression of me! I’m afraid that I won’t be able to stay in Ice and Snow City for too long.’ Luo Rou giggled before saying, “You still say you’re not jealous? Hey! You should look at yourself.”

Long Ling turned extremely bashful. She was just about to retort when she heard a clear sharp voice, “Long’er! Rou’er! You all came to play! I was just feeling vexed because I didn’t know what to do. Very good! Since you’ve already come, let Uncle Ming cook us something good to eat. I only need to go pester him a bit and he will certainly agree to cook something for us.”

Along with the voice, a red silhouette came into sight. Nian Bing suddenly discovered that red was the color that fit Xue Jing the most. Her figure, draped in red, was like a passionate flame that could melt everything it touched.

Thanks to Long Ling and Luo Rou standing in front of him, hiding more than half of his body from Xue Jing’s sight, the latter hadn’t taken notice of him. Instead, she talked to Long Ling with surprise. “Ling’er, what’s going on? How come your face is so red? I hope you’re not sick!”

When Luo Rou, who was standing next to them, heard Xue Jing's question, she immediately laughed so much that the embarrassed Long Ling wished she could find a hole in the ground to hide into.

Nian Bing got up and timely helped Long Ling. "Miss Xue Jing, we meet again."

Xue Jin's attention was suddenly attracted by Nian Bing's tall figure as he got up. Looking at him, Xue Jing's expression changed greatly before she coldly asked, "It's you, huh? Who let you enter our Pure Wind House? We're just a small place that cannot serve such a big figure like you. Please leave! We don't welcome you."

Nian Bing didn't care about her attitude and calmly smiled, "Miss Xue Jing must not misunderstand. Today, I came as a visitor. Since Pure Wind House is opened to do business, I think that you also have no reason to refuse a guest, much less a mage. Am I right?"

Xue Jing snorted and was about to say something when Luo Rou hurriedly interrupted, "Jing Jing, don't take the previous matter to heart. Today, we followed him here to see how he's going to make a fool out of himself. On my account. Can you give me some face?"

Xue Jing looked distracted for a moment before she doubtfully asked, "What's going on?"

Nian Bing answered, "Miss Xue Jing, I think you will certainly want to know why I originally wanted to go to the Grand Pavilion

before coming to the Pure Wind House to chop firewood, although I am a mage and wouldn't necessarily need to do such job, I still did."

Hearing those words, Xue Jing and Long Ling still felt nothing wrong, but Luo Rou's heartbeat suddenly sped up. 'That's right! He's such a clever person. He won't do anything that he deems pointless. Since he entered the Pure Wind House to chop wood, he must have had his own reasons. It should not be as simple as only to conceal himself as the Magic Reaper.' When she thought about it, Luo Rou finally felt that perhaps she had indeed lost the bet.

Xue Jing coldly snorted and said, "So, you're the kind of person who came to our Pure Wind House with malicious intentions. I don't know what goes inside your head to make you insist on going to chop firewood. It's something a proper mage would never do. From what I see, you're not an idiot. You actually have mental issues."

Nian Bing calmly said, "That's right! I came to your Pure Wind House for a reason but certainly not with ill-intent. You must all want to know why I accepted the job of a woodchopper. It's very easy to understand the reason as I will soon let you all see why with your own eyes. Miss Xue Jing, can you please ask Master Ming Yuan to come out? In fact, he's the real reason why I came to Pure Wind House."

Xue Jing blanked for a moment before saying, "You came here because of Uncle Ming Yuan?" She really hadn't expected this. Nian Bing's answer was beyond her expectations.

Nian Bing faintly smiled. “It’s the truth. As long as you can invite Master Ming out, everything about me will be clear.”

Xue Jing pondered before she replied, “Alright, then. Please wait for a moment. Let me see what relationship you have with Uncle Ming. He may not be able to recognize you now that you’re like this.” As she finished speaking, her red silhouette turned around and left in a hurry.

Nian Bing turned to the waiter near him. “Since Pure Wind House is Ice Snow City’s best restaurant, I suppose that you have all kinds of tableware. May I trouble you to bring me a platter of one meter diameter? It mustn’t be deep. Could you also bring me nine cucumbers and three sugar canes? Many thanks. As for the rest of the money, think of it as gift.”

Although the waiter saw that the relationship between Nian Bing and Xue Jing was not exactly harmonious, Nian Bing had come along with Long Ling and Luo Rou. The waiter did not waste words, and immediately left to prepare everything Nian Bing had asked for.

Long Ling asked with astonishment, “Nian Bing, what do you want to do with such a tray? And what about the cucumber? Don’t tell me you want to ask Uncle Ming to cook for us in public? This is an impossible thing to do. Uncle Ming’s skills cannot be leaked outside!”

Nian Bing sighed before replying, “What do you mean, they cannot be leaked outside? If other people can learn from just looking, then it means they have the ability. If people attached too

much value to something because it was theirs, then who knows how much heritage and tradition wouldn't have been passed down to this day. Ling'er, don't be impatient. You just wait and see."

After a while, Xue Jing returned with Ming Yuan. As Xue Jing walked to Nian Bing, she asked, "Uncle Ming is already here. Now, can you explain why you came to Pure Wind House to find Uncle Ming?" While she spoke, her eyes looked mockingly at Nian Bing. "Were you looking for Uncle Shu only to pay your respects to him?"

Nian Bing smiled with indifference as he replied, "Why wouldn't that be possible? This is what we call attaining eminence as an expert. Master Ming, I don't know if you still remember that day when I recited the production formula of the Golden Aromatic Ring?"

When Ming Yuan looked at Nian Bing dressed in a mage's magic gown, he showed a somewhat dumbstruck expression. He only shook off his stupor once Nian Bing asked him the question. As he looked at the young woodcutter from before dressed in a Great Mage's clothes, suspiciousness crept into his voice as he asked, "You... How did you become a mage? On that day, I couldn't look for you because of the lockdown of the city. After the situation was resolved, I had the time to go find you, but you had already left Pure Wind House at that time. Indeed, I did find it very strange that you knew about the formula recipe for the Golden Aromatic Ring. That recipe was something passed on by master from one generation to another. The key-points of the recipe were kept secret and outsiders couldn't have possibly known them. That's the reason why in other restaurants, even if they can serve the Golden Aromatic Ring, it's still very different from the authentic

Golden Aromatic Ring at Pure Wind House.”

Nian Bing smiled as he replied, “The formula was passed down to me from my master.” Master Ming, you’re very smart, so I’m sure you already understood.” At that moment, the waiter who went out to fetch the things Nian Bing had asked for came back. Walking towards Nian Bing, he held a platter in his hands.

Nian Bing extended his right hand and steadily received the platter before putting it on the table. The one meter in diameter platter almost covered the entire table. Nian Bing faintly smiled. “Now, I’ll give the answers to all your questions. Master Ming. Cooking skills are similar to how a boxer never forgets how to punch or how a singer never forgets how to sing. Amongst your kitchenware you must have a knife you’re most pleased with. I would like to borrow it for a moment.”

Ming Yuan’s expression changed as he coldly refuted, “Impossible! For a chef, the knife is akin his life. It follows the same principle as warriors with their weapons.”

Nian Bing kept his smile. “So, it’s like this? I believe your master must have told you that in the past there was once a person who help him when he needed it the most. What’s more, that person had imparted three great skills to him, which resulted in his reputation as the Kitchen Immortal to skyrocket.

When Ming Yuan heard these words, he was suddenly greatly alarmed. “How did you know?” His tone became different, wanting to know Nian Bing’s answer, since this matter was a big secret and his master had only told him about it and no one else.

Nian Bing smiled lightly before replying, “That’s because the one who helped Master Ling was my master.”

Ming Yuan’s body strongly trembled. “Your, your master is Demon...”

Nian Bing interrupted Ming Yuan with a wave of his hand. “Master Ming, could I borrow a knife to use?”

There was respect in Ming Yuan’s eyes when he looked at Nian Bing. Ming Yuan looked at the cucumbers and the sugar canes on the platter and nodded. “It’s certainly possible.” Immediately, he took out a 35 centimeter-long dagger. Except for Nian Bing, everyone else couldn’t see where Ming Yuan had taken the knife out from.

Nian Bing took the knife. He examined the blade, which had a faint green light covering its edges, and praised it, “Such good knife! It’s truly the Kitchen Immortal’s treasured knife, the Immortal Beheader. It is said that this knife once chopped off an ox’s head so quick, blood hadn’t had the chance to stain the blade. This is truly a good knife!”

Ming Yuan stood there with both his hands on the side. “I wouldn’t dare accept such praise. This knife can only be served to highlight the greatness of your revered master’s True Sun Knife.” Ming Yuan no longer doubted Nian Bing’s identity ever since Nian Bing had spoken about the secret of his master’s skill, a secret only Ming Yuan knew. Besides, the mnemonic verses for the Golden

Aromatic Ring was something Ming Yuan's master had learned from his benefactor.

Nian Bing faintly smiled. He looked at his surroundings and caught sight of the three women's gloomy state. He said with a smile, "I'm starting. Although the weather is now slowly turning colder, it's still summer. Today, I will make a refreshing dish for you three ladies. I hope you will like it. Could you please step back for a bit? Thank you."

Chapter 24.2 – Nine Mysterious Green Dragons Concealed In Clouds Of Ice

At this moment, even the most simple-minded Xue Jing could tell that Nian Bing had changed. She was familiar with Ming Yuan ever since her father invited him to be a chef at Pure Wind House. She couldn't fathom how much time and effort her father had spent to successfully convince Ming Yuan. Although, officially Ming Yuan was the head chef of Pure Wind House, but, in reality his influence exceeded his position. When her father, Xue Ji, saw him, even he would be respectful and would always treat Ming Yuan like a brother. This was the first time she saw Ming Yuan have such a respectful expression and the one who caused such an expression to appear was no other than the mysterious Nian Bing, the one who had upset her so much.

Nian Bing moved next to the table. He picked up some chopsticks and stacked them at the table's leg in a neat and orderly pile. Then he took out all the cucumbers and sugar canes from the platter and piled them on top of the chopsticks. It was very clear that he didn't want the ingredients to be dirtied by dust. Finally, he kept only one cucumber in his hand.

Nian Bing's left hand held one end of the cucumber before slowly lifting it up. The waiter brought back nine cucumbers. The cucumbers weighed almost the same which met with Nian Bing's request, but they all had different shapes. Nian Bing was staring at the cucumber and seemed to have completely forgotten about his surroundings. He only had his eyes on the green cucumber. In his right hand, he was holding Ming Yuan's knife without moving.

Xue Jing looked at Nian Bing who was standing there strangely. She couldn't help turning impatient. Just when she was about to say something, she was stopped by Ming Yuan with a shake of his head, hinting at her to not disturb Nian Bing's concentration. Then, he himself resumed his observation as he watch attentively at Nian Bing's hands, waiting with anticipation at Nian Bing's next move.

At last, Nian Bing moved, to be precise, his right hand moved while his left hand kept holding one end of the cucumber as steady as a boulder. The knife in his right hand rose in the air and turned into a green light as it lightly cut the cucumber into 5 centimeters pieces with one swing.

Xue Jing almost laughed out, but she forced herself to keep her mouth closed and didn't laugh out. 'In the end after half a day of waiting, it was only just cutting a cucumber.' However, she soon couldn't even make a smile as Nian Bing's wrist flipped and sliced the cucumber from one end to the other. The slices of cucumber were linked together, and what was most peculiar about that was that each slice was connected to each other by a tiny point which, according to common sense, shouldn't be able to keep the slices linked together as each slice was too heavy and it should have broken already. But in reality, the points of connections were still holding together the slices of cucumber.

Ming Yuan exclaimed in surprise subconsciously, "The lotus roots may break, but the fiber remains joined!" As he realized the words he just said, he quickly covered his mouth. However, he was unable to hide the excitement sparkling inside his eyes. As a top-rated chef, how could he not feel anything when he watched such perfect cooking skills?

Nian Bing didn't hear Ming Yuan at all. His mind was completely focused on the cucumber in his hand. Once again, the knife merely moved, but this time, it wasn't like the two slow and unhurried knife slices. This time, the knife was like snow, with the flip of the wrist, the knife seemed to flutter in the air to the point that even Ming Yuan was unable to see clearly what Nian Bing was doing. He only saw slices of cucumber slowly falling down with each slice linked to each other by a point. Slowly the chain of slices became longer and longer, slowly reaching the platter, and occupying the center of the platter. As the bladelight continued to flicker, everyone looked on in complete rapture.

Luo Rou recalled the time when she saw Nian Bing cut her birthday cake. It was very clear that the knife technique he used to slice the cucumber was much more difficult than the technique he used to cut the cake. Not only were the cucumber slices thin and connected by a point, the most praiseworthy characteristic was how even the place of connection between the slices was without any damage or defect.

Finally, the cucumber's head fell into the middle of the platter. The cucumber that was less than 30 centimeters long was now sliced into something that was more than 45 centimeters long and he didn't even cut the whole cucumber. The knife in Nian Bing's hand kept flickering with light as he continued to cut, making the cucumber's chain longer and longer. His wrist shook and the knifelight froze for a moment before it cleverly slashed down behind the cucumber head once. Then, the knife continued to flicker as the cucumber chain slice continued to elongate. When the cucumber slices were able to circle the platter three times, Nian Bing finally reached the other end of the cucumber. He didn't slice it further. Instead, he put the other end of the cucumber on

the side on the platter.

In everyone's eyes, towards such knife skills, they could only describe it as miraculous. The miracle continued with the second cucumber that Nian Bing had pick up at some point, but this time, the light in everyone's gaze was clearly different. As the knife blade flickered and fluttered once again, everyone focused their sights onto the cucumber in Nian Bing's hand, without being able to take off their eyes. Although Nian Bing cut the second cucumber the same way as he did with the first one, in the bystander's eyes, the movements were much more vivid.

Similar to the first cucumber, the second one was sliced into a chain that coiled inside the platter three times. Nian Bing did the same for the third cucumber, the fourth one and so on, until there was no more cucumbers left. Luo Rou who had good eyes discovered with amazement that after Nian Bing had finished slicing the cucumber, a faint white mist could be seen on the layer of sliced cucumber.

In fact, since the beginning, no one took notice of that phenomena until Nian Bing started slicing the fifth cucumber. At that time, the whole platter was already covered with cucumbers and a faint white mist. The white mist covered the cucumbers, making their green color more fainted, making it looked extremely ethereal.

No one knew since when the owner of Pure Wind House, Xue Ji, arrived and stood behind his daughter because everyone's state of mind was in daze by Nian Bing and no one noticed the arrival of Xue Ji. When Xue Ji saw the rapid flickerings and light trajectory

of the knife,, he immediately followed suit with everyone else. As someone who had a Martial Master's strength, he naturally was able to follow Nian Bing's movements with his eyesight. From what he saw, the movements didn't need much thinking to be executed. Looking at the elongated chain of sliced cucumbers, Xue Ji reached the conclusion that his power control couldn't compare to Nian Bing. As for Nian Bing's top rated knife skills that cut as if it was like drawing with a brush, it had reached such a great height that it was astonishing to see.

When all nine cucumbers were sliced, the whole platter was covered with nine coiling cucumbers that all looked the same. Surprisingly, all the cucumbers' head were slightly raised and assembled together in the middle of the platter. The cucumbers were all spaced evenly without any errors, the same goes for the tail of the cucumbers.

A light flickered, going straight towards Ming Yuan. By reflex, Ming Yuan lifted his hand in protection, but what entered his hand was the knife's handle.

“Master Ming, thank you for lending me your knife.” Nian Bing's attention was already completely focused on the dish in front of him. His sight setting on the cucumbers as green as jadeite and the faint ice mist spiraling into the air. His hand went into his chest pocket where he took out a small pouch. It was the same pouch that contained the tools he used to make the pigeon dish for Feng Nu at Shui Huo Metal Shop.

Without even looking, he used his forefinger and middle finger to search the bag. As he pulled out his fingers from the cloth bag, a

light flashed as a small knife no longer than 12.5 centimeters was taken out. The knife's tip was extremely small and fine. The same goes for the knife's edge, spine and handle as its were no longer than 6.3 centimeters. There was a faint blue light emitting from halfway across the blade and on the side of the blade was a sinister carving.

Ming Yuan took a deep breath and muttered to himself, "The Demonic Engraving God Knife!"

Nian Bing responded, "The work of the Gods hidden in blue flames. Engraving dragons, engraving phoenix with one wave of the knife, just like a demonic engraver."

Ming Yuan glanced at Nian Bing. "The Demonic Engraving once out, who knows what it will strive?" As he looked at the Demonic Engraving, his eyes was brimming with respect.

Nian Bing's sight rested on the nine cucumbers' heads. "Demonic Engraving Knife, although it is good. It also depends on how it will be used in one's hands. I hope I won't disgrace my master's name." Suddenly, his waist bent as if it suddenly snapped and his thighs leaned on the table's side. His whole body was bent 90° and was now above the table, facing the middle of the platter. His wrist slightly shook and, in a flash, nine blade lights could be seen. From the cucumbers' heads, suddenly, many cuts could be seen on it.

Ming Yuan suddenly understood what Nian Bing wanted to do. His eyes were overwhelmed with shock. At first, his heart still had many misgivings, but, ever since Nian Bing's first knife slice, he was very clear about one thing, he was far from being that youth's

rival.

At this moment, not only Ming Yuan, even Xue Ji forgot to breath. “Don’t tell me this is the legendary technique ‘Dancing of the Gathering Rain Dragon’? Heavens! Don’t tell me it truly exists?”

Soon enough, Xue Ji’s questions were answered by the reality in front of his eyes. From Nian Bing’s knife, the hidden blue light suddenly seemed like a cold flame pulsing between Nian Bing’s fingers. As the knife moved, Nian Bing softly recited, “As the demonic hand fell, the startled Heavens transformed. The finished carving billowed hundred of cycles. God’s work lasting through eternity. Today, it shall start to exist. The knife raised only to reflect the waning moon in the cold spring.” With each sentence that Nian Bing uttered, Xue Ji observed that the cucumbers’ head was placed in the middle of the platter. Amongst the unceasingly swirling of the ethereal blue light, more and more cuts were made while pieces of green cucumber were sent flying into the air. As Nian Bing ended his recitation on the word “spring”, he had made a total of 260 cuts, including the first nine cuts on the cucumbers’ head. In the short span of a few sentences, he was able to cut the cucumbers’ head so many times. All the green pieces of cucumber that were sent flying had now orderly and neatly landed in the middle of the platter forming an intriguing circular and deep green vein-patterned without the slightest deviation or anything out of place. There were also of same dimension. The most earth shaking thing was that on each piece of cucumber was something engraved on it.

What was engraved was nine green like jade carvings of a head where antlers sprouted out. Near the corner of the mouth rising to

the top of the head were whiskers, under the forehead was a pearl. The nine heads engraved were clearly those of a dragon! The dragon head looked lifelike as if it was in high spirits and ready to swallow clouds and blow out fog.

That was the secret of the Demonic Engraving. Nian Bing sighed as he looked at the nine dragon heads. “Unfortunately, I still haven’t reach the peak of perfection of the Dancing of the Gathering Rain Dragons.”

Ming Yuan hurriedly asked, “What will happen if you had reach the peak of perfection?”

Nian Bing calmly smiled before replying, “Nine dragons will soar through the clouds in constant permutation.” As Nian Bing finished talking, both his hands grabbed on the platter and used a bit of effort to lift it from the table. He did it very carefully as if he was afraid that the design will shift with his movements.

At this time, Xue Jing and Long Ling were already dumbstruck, only Luo Rou’s gaze was still slightly relaxed, but there was a lot of things flickering through her gaze.

Nian Bing’s whole body emitted a layer of light blue light. The light followed his gaze and condensed itself on the table. A block of ice, the size of a human hand, appeared on the table. The surface of the ice cube was extremely brilliant and looked like a round disk, with a thickness of 2.5 centimeters. This was the most basic ice spell, but Nian Bing used it in such a way. Because his magic control was strong, it resulted into such a wonderful effect. It was absolutely stunning and was even comparable to a rank 4 magic

spell.

He put down the plate once again, placing it right in the middle of that ice cube. He lightly give the edge of the platter a spin which unexpectedly started to slowly revolve on the ice cube. The Demonic Engraving reappeared. Every time the other end of the cucumber faced Nian Bing, an ethereal blue light flickered five times. After three spins, he made another 135 cuts, but from the point view of the spectators, it only seemed like his hand shook a few times. The dark green pieces of cucumbers fell and formed nine clouds making the nine lifelike emerald green dragons appeared as if they were ready to fly off.

As Nian Bing finished cutting the dragon tails, the nine cucumbers inside the platter seemed as if they transformed and turned to life, like nine azure dragons hovering between clouds and mist. The platter continued to spin around slowly. The nine azure dragons appeared as if they were frolicking between the clouds and mist, greeting each other as if they were interacting with each other in mutual respect.

Nian Bing wasn't finished yet. He picked three sugar canes and the Demonic Engraving flickered again. The sugar canes' skin were slice off and dropped outside of the platter. While the Demonic Engraving seemed as if it was fluttering, the sugar canes transformed into a glossy and white jade under the exciting slices of the Demonic Engraving. Only Ming Yuan knew what Nian Bing was doing. Xue Ji waited for everyone to become aware of it. The sphere of sugar canes seemed simple at first glance, but it very challenging for anyone to cut the sugar canes into a into a perfectly round and smooth sphere. However, Nian Bing had already given them a lot of things to be amazed of. At this moment, everyone's

mind was already numbed from shock and amazement.

Nian Bing gently and carefully placed the engraved sugar canes inside the dragon heads in the middle of the platter, completing the image of nine dragons each holding a pearl.

It was perfect. Except for being perfect, there was no other word that could describe such a dish inside everyone's mind.

The platter once again rotated while Nian Bing picked up two more sugar canes. The blue light gathered inside his hand. For the first time, he didn't peel anything. Instead he quickly grinded the two sugar canes against each other.

'Sugar canes could be grinded? Won't it become juice instead?' However, the extremely frozen sugar canes didn't turned into juice when grounded. It became milky white sugar cane powder that floated down. It carried a sweet scent and added a touch of elegance to the dish. As the powder fell, the ice mist rose, spreading out the fallen sugar powder in every nook and cranny of the platter.

The nine lifelike azure dragons was soaring into the clouds, harnessing the mist while holding a pearl. The green color inside the platter didn't became monotonous despite the lack of colors because the colors varied in intensity. The sugar canes' pearls and ice mist were used as decorations. Everything was perfectly thought of.

Nian Bing clapped his hands while smiling calmly, before saying,

“The cucumber’s sweet scent combined with the sugar cane sweet flavor, supplemented by the ice frost, are the most suitable to be used to ease the heat.”

Ming Yuan’s eyes were sparkling. “It is possible for you to tell me the name of this dish?”

Nian Bing calmly smiled as he responded, “Nine mysterious green dragons concealed in clouds of ice...”

Chapter 25.1 – Art Shakes The Pure Wind House

Yes, it really was the Nine Mysterious Green Dragons Concealed in Clouds of Ice. This was more famously known as the first of the seven great meals after Nian Bing became famous.

Looking at the Nine Mysterious Green Dragons Concealed in Clouds of Ice, covered in a layer of mist, everyone at the venue felt as though they were unable to close their mouths. After all, this couldn't just be described as a dish; it was obviously a work of art! For this invaluable artwork, Nian Bing had spent in total, a quarter of an hour, to complete the carving of the dish. Upon seeing the ice mist curling around those nine vividly lifelike green dragons, no one could make a move.

Nian Bing's gaze fell on Luo Rou. "Miss Wise Girl, now you should what it is I do. That's right, my true profession is actually that of a chef. Miss Xue Jing, at first, I had to choose between entering either the Great City Pavilion or the Pure Wind House. This was in order to explore the art of cooking with another chef, without any hidden motive.

"I think we can move past our misunderstandings now. This one dish must have confirmed a great deal of things for you. Yet you are still probably suspicious of how I, a mage, learned about making dishes. I can clearly tell you that in my heart, being a chef is as noble a profession as being a mage. With my cooking skills, I can satisfy countless people's desire to eat. Cooking is also an art form. For me, the pursuit of cooking is a long, long road.

“Okay, I have said what I wished. Everyone, please take your time to try this. If the ice mist disperses, the dish will lose its proper flavor. I have already explained my reasoning clearly. So long, everyone. Ling’er, you should stay. I will head back on my own.” Gathering his things into a cloth sack, he tucked it away against his chest. Nian Bing nodded slightly to the people around him and turned to leave. No one stopped him. Everyone’s focus was still trained on the dish in front of them, while Nian Bing’s voice reverberated in his or her mind.

The other chef, Ming Yuan, was the first to respond. From the side, he brought out chopsticks and gave them to Xue Ji, the three girls, and himself. He was the first to take action, picking up a slice of cucumber. When the chopsticks made contact with the cucumber, he could feel the separation between the cucumber slices. There was not a sense of connectedness to be found, though the green dragons had been connected very cleverly.

Once they saw Ming Yuan move, the others followed, placing a cucumber slice in their mouths. Upon entering the mouth, the cucumbers changed, transforming into a sweet liquid that slid into their stomachs. It was an indescribable feeling. It felt like, in an instant, the 36 million pores all over the body completely opened. An ice-cold breath merged with the heavens and earth. This fresh feeling made people as light as an immortal. Not only had the heated tension disappeared, even their moods recovered, awakening to a clear, sweet taste.

The three girls—Luo Rou, Long Ling, and Xue Jing—had eyes that twinkled splendidly. Girls were the most fond of this wonderful flavor. Chopsticks flew into the icy mist non-stop. In just a moment, the nine dragons had completely disappeared from the

icy mist, already contained in the stomachs of the five people. Cool. Sweet. Fresh. Stimulating. It was wonderful to feel such a refreshing feeling from head to toe. What was even more ingenious was that this dish, with such plain ingredients, fit right with the Pure Wind House's theme—simplicity and elegance.

Ming Yuan laid down his chopsticks. Shutting his eyes, he mumbled, "The cucumber's sweet fragrance was completely released by that frigid chill. The addition of the sugar cane's sweetness made the freshness more penetrating. Altogether, it was a miraculous dish."

Xue Ji looked at Ming Yuan and said. "Little Ming, if you were to make this dish, would it turn out as good as this?"

Ming Yuan opened his eyes to look at Xue Ji. He shook his head, saying, "That's impossible. The pivotal points of this dish lie in two areas. One area was knife skills, and the other was magic. That magic had scattered ice in just the right amounts to arouse the sweet fragrance of the cucumber. I definitely cannot do that. If I used the ice being brought into town the day after tomorrow, the flavor would be far different. What's more, who could make that formation of sugar cane ice powder? Only his master could have thought of using magic in the kitchen.

"How wonderful, a magic cook! He will become a leading figure in the culinary arts world. Really, cooking has no limit. I still have much I need to learn."

Xue Jing's eyes flickered with a strange light. She mumbled, "I really didn't think he was actually a chef and entered the Pure

Wind House because he wanted to learn about cooking through interacting with other cooks. I never realized such a cheap vegetable like a cucumber could be made into something so delicious. If he helped us, maybe our Pure Wind House would become better. Father, can we ask him to come back and aid Uncle Ming?”

Xue Ji heard his daughter's words and felt his heart stutter. He turned his head to look at Ming Yuan, who sighed lightly. “Big brother, if he really wants to come, then I would give him the position of senior chef. Although he isn't that old, he has already reached such a height. However, you guys all heard what he said before. His ambitions are great. No way would he be content to hold such a small piece of territory. I'm afraid there is no way he would agree to stay.”

Xue Ji sighed. He said, “The first time I saw him, I knew he stood out from the crowd, yet I never thought his specialty was actually cooking. No matter what he said, I will do my utmost to try. This so-called person must listen to the mandate of heaven. If he really has no desire to stay, then at the very least I will have gained a friend. Oh, that's right. Little bro Ming, who IS his master?”

Ming Yuan's eyes let out a reverent air. He said, “Big bro, you should've heard of the Five Great Chef Gods of the culinary world.”

Xue Ji nodded his head. “Of course I've heard of them. I studied them in my early years. It's a pity that the Five Great Chef Gods seem to have become hermits. There is no way to get them as a chef. You brought up the Five Great Chef Gods. They should be

Demon, Strong, Camel, Spirit, Mysterious.”

Ming Yuan said, “That’s right, that’s them. The Mysterious Chef God is the one who ranked them. Is this ranking according to seniority and points? Although the Five Great Chef Gods are tied in ranking, they do have their differences. That young man is the successor of the Demon Chef, first of the Five Great Chef Gods. From the very beginning, my master only made it this far after receiving the help of Senior Demon Chef. Master has always regarded Demon Chef as his benefactor, but at the same time his own master. Master’s age is greater than Senior Demon Chef’s by not just a little, but whenever he brings up this Greatest Demon Chef, he speaks with such reverence. It’s just a pity that after that incident, Senior Demon Chef left the culinary world. Since then, there has been no word from him.

“I did not expect that his disciple had actually come out to the world. Compared to Senior Demon Chef, he is probably worse in his temperature technique, but he also has the advantage of magic. I believe that after several years of experience, it will not be difficult for him to attain the previous peak of Senior Demon Chef’s achievements. He may even surpass him.”

Xue Ji’s eyes exuded an extremely surprised feeling. “Demon Chef, he is actually Demon Chef’s disciple. Ai, I was really too silly. I let go of such a person without knowing his worth. If my peers knew that Demon Chef’s disciple was actually at our Pure Wind House cutting firewood, I can’t even imagine how they would laugh at me. Jing’er, go and prepare lavish gifts. We will pay a visit to the Mage Association and apologize.”

Xue Jing, extraordinarily, did not get angry. She nodded softly and left from the back of the main hall.

Luo Rou and Long Ling exchanged a look. Luo Rou said to Xue Ji, “Uncle Xue, we are going back. Nian Bing was actually a chef, which was extremely contrary to what I expected. I flaunted myself as intelligent, but I’ve lost twice to him already. It seems that this Wise Girl nickname should be revoked. We’ve troubled Uncle and Jing Jing. Goodbye, Uncle.” Luo Rou’s heart was more complicated than Xue Jing’s at this time. Nian Bing used this move as verification. The bet had been lost, yet Luo Rou did not have the slightest feeling of regret. She had been sincerely convinced of her defeat. It was time to make good on their deal.



Nian Bing walked along the main thoroughfare of Ice Snow City. Since he had left Peach Blossom Forest, this was the first time he had exerted all he had to make a dish. Right now, his mood was extremely good. Not only was it because he had resolved the matter between Xue Jing and Luo Rou, but it was even more so because he had discovered that his increased knowledge of magic had additional applications in cooking. When he was making the Nine Mysterious Dragons Concealed in Clouds of Ice, his magic had been used to achieve an intangible realm. Although it was only the lowest ranked ice magic, using it to such a degree made him extremely satisfied with himself. Besides temperature control, which, compared with his master, he was still far from reaching, he had become one step closer to integrating magic with cooking. The art of cooking was now within his reach. He did not need to repeatedly practice over and over again to raise his strength. Right now, he need an opportunity, an opportunity to raise his

comprehension.

While walking, a wheel behind him suddenly made a sound. Nian Bing subconsciously stepped to the side, but discovered the carriage he had been riding before had stopped next to him. Luo Rou leaned out of the carriage. With something strange in her voice, she said, “Great Chef, get in. I will send you home.”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and didn’t refuse. He stepped onto the vehicle. Long Ling, at this time, sat in the innermost part of the cart. She lowered head and did not look at him.

“I will be troubling you again, Miss Wise Girl,” Nian Bing said politely.

Luo Rou said with an ill-temper, “Are you mocking me? Relax, a loss is a loss. I will fulfill the agreement. Go ahead and tell me your demands.”

Nian Bing stared blank before saying, “I never wanted you to promise anything. It was just a joke, no need to regard it seriously.”

Luo Rou snorted and said, “If you agree to a bet, you must accept a loss. Since I have already lost, then naturally I will fulfill my promise. Who told you it was a joke? Although I’m a girl, I will not cower and hide.”

Nian Bing laughed and shook his head, saying, “There’s no need.

I honestly do not have anything to ask of you.”

Luo Rou’s eyes exuded a strange light. She said provocatively, “Didn’t you ask me at the beginning, ‘if your condition is to marry you what would happen?’ You can go ahead and ask that of me.”

Nian Bing was shocked. He smiled, saying, “No, I don’t desire to be jumped from behind and killed by a group of your followers. What’s more, aren’t you already engaged?”

Luo Rou said, “Do you not dare? It’s just having a fiancée—I haven’t married anyone. You can pursue me. If you use your favor, then naturally, I will give you an opportunity.

Nian Bing stared blankly. It looked as though Luo Rou was serious. He extended an arm in front of Luo Rou and said, “Pinch me and tell me I’m dreaming. Miss Wise Girl actually took the initiative to ask me to pursue her. It’s hard to believe.” Luo Rou giggled and used her full strength to pinch Nian Bing’s arm. Nian Bing suffered from the pain, immediately pulling his arm back. He said bitterly, “You didn’t need to use that much force.”

Luo Rou snorted. She said, “Who told you to hide yourself this deeply, to the point where even I had been fooled? This is still light; I cannot wait to kill you. Does beating me feel good?”

Nian Bing’s heart trembled slightly. He nodded his head and huffed out a laugh and said, “I have to admit, it really is a feeling of accomplishment. Yet, I won’t say it was a very noble accomplishment.”

Luo Rou glared at him, saying, “You can make the condition now. Don’t tell me you aren’t attracted to me at all?”

Upon looking at Luo Rou’s crystal clear blue eyes, Nian Bing suddenly understood many things. Luo Rou was not actually looking at him. Rather, she wanted him and her to renew the battle from the dance floor. If he made the condition to pursue her or even to take her as a wife, then maybe the trouble to follow would be even more difficult to deal with. What a wise girl. As expected, she wasn’t simple. Her competitive spirit surpassed that of a man. Since he’d already understood this, how could he be fooled? “Miss Wise Girl, my condition you must abide by has already been fulfilled.”

Luo Rou was temporarily stunned, but quickly understood. She stared at Nian Bing and said, “You rogue.” Nian Bing had asked her to pinch him before, but was that considered a proper condition?

Nian Bing adopted an innocent expression. He said, “A rogue? I won but didn’t make things difficult for you, yet you even called me a rogue. Honestly, there mustn’t be a heaven. I see how it is; I better get off the carriage.”

Finally, Luo Rou could not keep up her cold attitude. She said, annoyed, “You sit down. You’re not allowed to move. Do you need to be so guarded against me? Don’t tell me I’m as scary as a severe flood and ferocious beasts?”

Nian Bing smiled and said nothing in response. He sat down and

didn't utter a word for the rest of the trip. In front of Luo Rou was a handsome youth, unmoved by force or persuasion. Even if she was filled with intelligence, there was no chance for her to use her abilities. She could not help but become angry.

For the rest of the way, the three did not open their mouths at all. The carriage settled to a stop in front of the Mage Association entrance. Nian Bing was the first to descend and helped Long Ling, still deep in thought, to descend smoothly. To Wise Girl, still in the carriage, he said: "Thank you very much for the ride, miss. May fate bring us together again."

Luo Rou said fiercely, "Nian Bing, remember this: I am not finished with you. One day, we will meet each other again. Go!"

The carriage sped away. Nian Bing could not help but shake his head. "A woman's heart is as unfathomable as the ocean floor. I really cannot see through it. I think there isn't any more animosity between us, so why does she always make things more difficult for me?"

Chapter 25.2 – Art Shakes The Pure Wind House

Finally, Long Ling responded, “Rou’er was extremely bright, even as a child. No matter what it was, she always wanted to learn about it and could absorb that knowledge in a short period of time. Since she was a child until now, be it man or woman, no one had the ability to beat her. She is also very competitive. Since you are the first to make her taste defeat several times, her competitiveness, along with her curiosity towards you, has made her value you more. You absolutely cannot break away from it or there will be more trouble later on.”

Nian Bing didn’t care about it one bit as he said, “Then just let her do as she pleases, I don’t really care much about that.” In any case, after he was done learning about magic here, he would leave and would never see Luo Rou again. As such, this matter was not really that important. “Ling’er, let’s go. I still want to go back to the library and study.”

“Wait a minute.” Long Ling shouted at Nian Bing who then halted and turned back. As she looked at Nian Bing, her gaze showed hesitation.

Nian Bing asked, “What? Is there something else you want to say?”

Long Ling bit her lower lip before responding, “Nian Bing, is it really true? Your master is really a chef and not a mage?”

Nian Bing slightly smiled. He understood what made Long Ling so anxious. His tone softened as he replied, “Ling’er, listen to me. It’s true that my master is a chef, but so is the fact that I am a mage. You have to understand that there is an inseparable relation between the two as they are a part of me. Although my cooking skills cannot be said to be the best on the whole continent, it can still be considered top-rate, and when compared to magic, there is a great gap of comprehension between the two. It only takes a moment for me to understand new cooking skills whereas it would take me longer to learn new magic spells. You can rest assured. Since I am already a member of the Association, I will fulfill the oath I made during the ceremony and abide by my promise to help your Association. I am a man of my word.”

When she heard Nian Bing’s words, Long Ling finally sighed in relief. She took the initiative to grab his large hand and emotionally said, “Thank you, Nian Bing. I... I really don’t know what I should say.”

Looking at the beautiful and gentle Long Ling, Nian Bing felt a surge of warmth rush into his heart. Unconsciously, he gripped Long Ling’s hand tighter as he said, “There is no need to say anything. Since the Association has supported me so much, this is something I ought to do as repayment.”

Suddenly, a trace of disappointment rose inside Long Ling’s heart. She realized that what she’d wished to hear Nian Bing say was, “Everything I did is for you.”

“Nian Bing, Ling’er! Are you guys not back yet?” Shi Jiu’s voice came as a timely interruption. Simultaneously, both Nian Bing and

Long Ling felt a bit annoyed inside. Nian Bing quickly released Long Ling's hand. He still had an ambitious goal, so offending Shi Jiu at this time would be quite the unwise move.

“Big Brother Shi Jiu, we've returned.” Nian Bing gave a profound look to Long Ling before they went inside the Mage Association.

Shi Jiu welcomed them back resentfully. “Where did you go earlier? How come you came back after such a long time? I went to the library and heard you guys had went out.”

Nian Bing answered, “Earlier, Miss Luo Rou had me accompany her to Pure Wind House to explain some things to Miss Xue Jing. Since Ling'er was present, Miss Luo Rou invited her to go along with us. In fact, she had just sent us back.”

Once Shi Jiu heard Nian Bing and Long Ling weren't alone together, his look softened a bit. “Next time, before going out, you need to tell me and avoid making me worry.”

Nian Bing nodded with a faint smile. “Big Brother, I will head back to the library first. You and Ling'er can keep chatting.” After he finished talking, he left in big strides.

At that moment, Long Ling entered the Association. Shi Jiu welcomed her with enthusiasm. “Ling'er, you went out for half a day. It worried me to death. Right, I recently purchased two hairpins for you. I felt that they especially fit you. Come with me to have a look. I think you will certainly like it.”

Seeing Shi Jiu's earnestly, although Long Ling didn't really have any interest, she was gentle by nature and couldn't bear to refuse her senior brother. Just when she didn't know what to do, Long Zhi's voice was suddenly heard. "Little Jiu, what are you doing here instead of properly cultivating inside your room?"

Shi Jiu was most afraid of this person, his master, a Magic Scholar. Once he saw Long Zhi appear, he hurriedly paid his respects, "Master, Ling'er and Nian Bing went out a while ago. As I was somewhat anxious, I waited here for them."

Long Zhi glanced at Long Ling, then frowned. "Since they have already returned, you can also go back and cultivate. Look at our Nian Bing; compared to you, he's ten years younger yet he's already a Great Mage. I'm giving you one year; if you still can't break through to the realm of Great Mage in that time, then don't you dare say that you're my disciple in the future."

Once he saw that Long Zhi was angry, Shi Jiu was paralyzed by the intimidating atmosphere. He hurriedly said, "Yes, Master! I'm returning to my room to cultivate." He hurriedly left after finishing his sentence.

After Long Zhi saw that Shi Jiu had left, his expression immediately relaxed. He walked forward until he was next to his precious daughter. With a smile he inquired, "Where did you go to with Nian Bing?"

"Father..." Earlier, she had been mentally preparing herself to endure Shi Jiu, but now there was no need. Her tense nerves suddenly relaxed as she looked at her father. "Earlier, we went to

Pure Wind House.”

Long Zhi asked, “These days, Nian Bing must be very exhausted. He also needs to go out more often. Since you were a child, you always very attentive so you should take care of his daily life. That’s right, what do you think about Nian Bing?”

Long Ling blanked for a moment before replying, “He... is very good! He is very ambitious. What more, his comprehension is very high and not beneath Luo Rou. That person is also very outstanding, although somewhat mysterious.”

Long Zhi smiled. “Men like Nian Bing are first concerned with their career before they can settle down and marry. If a man didn’t have the ability, then he will only be mediocre all his life. I also feel that child Nian Bing is not bad.”

Long Ling hesitated for a bit before she decided to inform her father about the matter that happened at Pure Wind House earlier. “Father, the truth is... Nian Bing has another profession...”

At once, she retold in detail what had happened when she went out with Nian Bing. When Long Zhi heard his daughter’s story, his expression continuously changed. He also didn’t expected that the person he had the highest expectations for was a chef. Although he didn’t discriminate against chefs, he didn’t wish for Nian Bing to waste his energy on other things. “...So, this is what happened. However, Nian Bing said that his cooking skills had already reached a certain level and he didn’t need to practice anymore. What he needs is to cultivate magic more. Uncle Xue seems to value Nian Bing a lot. I’m afraid he will come in a while.”

There was a glint in Long Zhi's eyes. "So, that's why my intuition told me Nian Bing seemed to have something on his mind. It all makes sense now. He was a chef to begin with. No wonder he was at Pure Wind House before."

His voice barely fell when, outside, the sounds of a carriage and horses could be heard. Long Zhi bitterly laughed before saying, "My Big Brother Xue has always been impatient. Looks like he has just arrived. Ling'er, you go first. Leave everything to me."

Long Ling complied. Her had nearly blind trust in her father that came from her heart. Immediately, she felt a lot better. Turning around, she left for the library.

As soon as Long Ling left, Xue Ji and Xue Jing entered the Mage Association. The mages guarding the entrance of the Mage Association recognized them and didn't obstruct them.

Long Zhi laughed out loud. "What kind of wind blew Big Brother Xue and my little niece to come here? It really brightens up our place!"

Xue Ji came face to face with Long Zhi after a few big strides. He smiled bitterly as he said, "Please excuse your Big Brother for coming without announcement if it wasn't for something! This time, I came because I want you to help me with something."

Long Zhi's eyes glinted as he responded, "Big Brother, if you want Nian Bing to go with you and become a chef, then there is

nothing to say. You already have Ming Yuan. As for me, I cannot afford to lose him!”

Xue Ji blanked for a moment. His friendship with Long Zhi was deep, so he naturally understood why Long Zhi said such words. He just didn’t expect that there wasn’t even room for discussion. What’s more, he didn’t think that Nian Bing was this important to Long Zhi. Despite knowing this, he still probed his friend. “Younger Brother, Nian Bing is a chef. To be exact, in the future, he will certainly be a grand chef. Therefore...”

Long Zhi was resolute. “Big Brother, perhaps Nian Bing’s culinary talents are extraordinary and excellent, but let me inform you that Nian Bing’s biggest achievement was breaking through to the realm of Great Mage. In the future he can also become a grand mage. He is already a member of my Association. What’s more, he was only chopping wood at your Pure Wind House. It is certainly impossible for me to let go of him.”

Xue Jing clenched the brocade box in her hand while looking at her father and Long Zhi clashing with one another. Her heart couldn’t help but feel bitter. Not long ago, Nian Bing was just a good-for-nothing in her eyes, but he was now a talent being fought over by her father and Long Zhi. The contrast was too big. ‘If I had known the difference between us was really this great... Nian Bing... Sigh! Nian Bing... I really don’t know if I should hate you or...’

Xue Ji shook his head helplessly. “Forget about it. The truth is... this time, I didn’t come hoping for anything. Even if you didn’t stop me, I’m afraid Nian Bing will not go with me and stay at my

small restaurant. What happened before was my mistake, and to unexpectedly let him chop wood at Pure Wind House... This time, I came to apologize to him.”

Long Zhi was somewhat suspicious. “You only want to apologize? Big Brother, you also know that right now our Mage Association is slowly deteriorating. It was with great difficulty that we obtained such a talent. There is nothing I can do about it!”

Xue Ji smiled calmly before saying, “That’s right! Little Brother, don’t you know my character? I only want to see him once. After that, I will leave. Even if I can’t employ him, I can still be friends with him.”

Long Zhi blushed. Indeed, when it came to matters pertaining Nian Bing, he was really too nervous. He hurriedly stepped aside and said, “Big Brother, I will lead you to him. He’s in the library.”

On the third floor of the library, Nian Bing was sitting on the floor, completely absorbed in reading the magic documents in his hands. As long as there was a book in his hands, he would forget about everything around him. Although the books on the third floor were not numerous, the contents were more broad and profound, and it would be impossible to completely comprehend them in just a day or two. His strong interest in magic dated from long ago, so if he didn’t delve in it thoroughly it would be unlikely he would give up halfway.

Long Ling was looking at Nian Bing lifelessly. She discovered that his devoted appearance was the most attractive. Although he was reading without even giving her a glance, his handsome

appearance had long ingrained itself deep into her mind.

Long Ling had always believed in fate. Born into a family of mages, since childhood she had followed her father's footsteps and studied magic. She didn't have any other interest and firmly believed this was her life and her fate. Since this was so, she wanted to continue on this path. Shi Jiu was her senior brother and had always pursued her. He was very good to her. She had always believed in that ever since she was young. This is what fate had arranged for her, so when she grew up, she believed she would marry that senior brother who was ten years older than her.

But, ever since she met Nian Bing, she was convinced that her fate had changed. When Nian Bing first succeeded in creating a magic scroll and smiled at her with confidence, Long Ling knew that she was completely attracted by that eye-catching smile. For the first time, she felt a throbbing inside her heart that was coupled with an indescribable feeling. Every day, although she was only looked at him quietly, her heart felt very satisfied. So long as she looked at him, she could forget about everything.

At the beginning, Long Ling was somewhat scared of these rising feelings. However, today, when she saw how Nian Bing's hands gave birth to the Nine Mysterious Green Dragons Hidden in Clouds of Ice, the fear in her heart suddenly vanished. She clearly understood that she had fallen deeply in love with this mysterious man, Nian Bing. Although he wasn't that strong, she was deeply attracted by everything about him, even his shortcomings, and perhaps even his indifferent attitude. Except for cooking and magic, he seemed to not care about anything else, not even about Luo Rou, who was a beautiful and intelligent woman. In fact, he seemed to fear and even avoid her.

Long Ling couldn't help but frown when she heard the sound of footsteps. She really didn't want anyone to disturb her time with Nian Bing. She got up and, while trying to be careful and not make a sound, went downstairs. At that moment, she saw her father had brought the Xue parent and child with him. "Uncle Xue, Jing Jing. You came."

Xue Jing looked at Long Ling with a somewhat strange expression. "Ling'er, you also came to the library to study magic? I recall that two years ago you said you had already read all the books here."

Long Ling blushed and replied, "Nian Bing's understanding of magic is unusual, so I'm here to accompany him during his studies."

Long Zhi's heart moved. He clearly understood his daughter's character the most. He said with a smile, "Conveniently, she also takes care of Nian Bing. After all, he practices and cultivates very hard each day without rest and doesn't take good care of himself. If it wasn't for Ling'er reminding him every day, I fear that he would even forget about eating. That child is too single-minded. I really can't help but admire him."

Xue Ji glanced at Long Zhi and Long Zhi did the same. It was very obvious that Long Zhi's gaze was somewhat proud. Xue Ji couldn't help but shake his head. It was very clear that in terms of affection, his side was at a disadvantage. In the Pure Wind House, Nian Bing was only a firewood chopper, but in the Mage Association, he was a treasure. Long Zhi didn't hide the fact that he was sending his

daughter to attend to him. When comparing both sides, the difference was very large. Sigh! If only he could have seen Nian Bing's true abilities earlier, the current situation wouldn't have happened.

Xue Ji and Xue Jing walked towards Nian Bing. Although Nian Bing was focused, he still discovered there were two people standing next to him. Raising his head, he saw the Xue father and daughter. The surprise in his eyes couldn't be hid. He hurriedly stood and asked, "Mr Xue and Miss Xue Jing, why are you here?"

Chapter 26.1 – The Free Wind's Gentle Hymn

Xue Ji smiled slightly and said, “I also heard what younger brother Ming said and found out that you were actually Senior Demon Chef’s disciple. I am so ashamed to have actually let you chop firewood at the Pure Wind House.”

In his mind, Nian Bing said, ‘You are younger than my master, but you call my master, senior. It’s hilarious.’

Outwardly, he said, “Mister Xue, there is no need to be so polite. It is me who chose not to reveal my profession, how could you be to blame? I apologize for being unable to offer you a seat. .”

Xue Ji sighed lightly, then said, “I flaunted myself as someone who could read people, but this time I made such a mistake. For slighting you at the Pure Wind House, and also for my daughter making trouble for you, I apologize. My daughter acted willfully at that time, to actually make you pose as her boyfriend. As such a talented person, how could my daughter ever match up to you?”

Nian Bing felt kindly towards Xue Ji. “Mister Xue you are too courteous, I don’t deserve such praise. As long as Miss Xue Jing no longer blames Nian Bing for concealing himself, Nian Bing is satisfied.”

Xue Ji smiled slightly before saying, “You are youngsters. There is no harm in a little interaction between you two later. In terms of the culinary arts, even Little brother Ming has admitted to not being your equal. My only daughter, Jing’er, will be the inheritor

of the Pure Wind House. If she could learn some knowledge of the field of cooking from you, I could pass down the Pure Wind House worry-free.”

‘Long Zhi, you have a daughter. I have one too. My daughter does not look much worse than your daughter. It’s such a shame that my daughter’s temper is so terrible. This Nian Bing does not only have superior cooking skills, but is also not weak in magic. His moral character is also pretty good.....’

“Father.” Xue Jing’s pretty face pinked slightly. She looked at her father, and then looked at Nian Bing. She shyly lowered her head. The present her did not have a single trace of the wild girl.

Xue Ji reprimanded her. “You troublemaker, you still haven’t apologized to Nian Bing.

Xue Jing looked again at Nian Bing. She hesitated for a moment; the words of apology would not leave her mouth. Nian Bing said, “There is no need to apologize. Miss Xue Jing did not do anything wrong. I only hope that the Miss’ temper will change for the better. It’s better when girls are gentle.” While saying this, he looked at Long Ling to the side. Among the three beauties of Ice and Snow City, the one to give him the deepest impression was undoubtedly the Wise Girl Luo Rou. However, the one who gave Nian Bing the most favorable impression was the gentle Long Ling.

Xue Jing stared at Nian Bing, but in front of her father, she dared not say anything. Xue Ji sighed in his heart. In terms of temperament, his daughter was far from comparing with Long Ling! He took the brocade box from Xue Jing’s hands into his own.

To Nian Bing he said, “This is a small gift for you. I hope I did not disrespect you. Please accept this, Nian Bing. Although I know you cannot return to the Pure Wind House, I still hope you can become a friend of the Pure Wind House.” While saying this, Xue Jing took the brocade box and held it out in front of Nian Bing.

Nian Bing did not take it. “Mister Xue, is there need for such politeness? I cannot accept this present. The Pure Wind House has done nothing wrong. I also have a relationship with Master Ming. Naturally, I am the Pure Wind House’s friend.”

Xue Ji smiled slightly, saying, “This is similar to the so-called bestowing knighthood with a sword, this is an item passed down through the generations of the Xue family. My older brother inherited my father’s duchy; this is what I inherited. I do not have much use for it, but I think that for you, it will at least be of some assistance. You should accept it; it can be taken as my goodwill to you.”

Nian Bing shook his head, saying, “After listening to what you said, the more I can’t accept it. Seeing as it’s a treasure passed down in Mister Xue’s family, this object should be Miss Xue Jing’s to inherit.”

Xue Ji smiled slightly and said, “Since you have already promised to be the Pure Wind House’s friend, you don’t need to call me Mister Xue. Call me Uncle if you don’t mind. I will not force you to take it; however, would you not like to take a look at it? Though the outside of this brocade box is made of cloth, the inside is forged out of lead, and can keep the aura of things from leaking out.”

In his mind, Long Zhi silently said, ‘Not good. Based on what Xue Ji said, this brocade box must contain a treasure. In light of this, it’s too late for me to make a move. I did not think that Xue Ji regarded Nian Bing with enough importance to even bring out a treasure passed down in his family. What’s more, we’re not just receiving a few of Nian Bing’s scrolls. It seems I must wait till after they leave to make a move.’

As expected, although Nian Bing’s resolution was strong, the curiosity of a youngster was not small. Subconsciously, his eyes drifted towards the brocade box in Xue Ji’s hands. Xue Ji smiled slightly and unfastened the clasp of the brocade box. The instant the box opened, the whole room immediately filled with a green light. Even the air in the room began to flow more intensely. That was the aura of wind, the aura of the wind element. The wind element in the room flew quickly, gathering at the box and making the green light stronger. The wind seemed like it was groaning softly, a beautiful buzzing sound.

Long Zhi’s whole body shuddered. As a wind system Magic Scholar, how could he not recognize what it was. With his voice trembling, he said, “This, this is the Humming Wind Stone. In legends, as the Wind God moaned, his own great magic power condensed into the Humming Wind Stone! Only the Humming Wind Stone could emit such a strong aura of wind element. Big Brother Xue, you really have been working hard to hide this from me!”

Xue Ji smiled slightly. “Brother, if it was just a Humming Wind Stone, how could I not have given it to you? You know that I have always been generous as a brother. For things not part of my body, I would not regard the broom as my own¹ if I didn’t have a use for

it. Me and Jing Jing have fire attribute bodies, and are based on fire. Therefore, we have no use the stone. The reason I didn't give it to you, or even take it out for you to look at however, is because it's not just a Humming Wind Stone. It's a knife, one that can display the greatest of speeds, a knife with the Humming Wind Stone. The knife is called Proud Sky, but it has another name: The Free Wind's Gentle Hymn."

Finally, the long brocade box was completely opened. The wind element went crazy, probably because it had been sealed for too long. The whole library had been washed with a green color. The knife was 54 centimetres long. The blade was three inches wide, but the shape of the blade was exceedingly strange. It was not shaped like an ordinary knife, but the knife blade had a perfect arc. It was a knife with an extremely thin blade. Even at its thickest point it was not even a seventh of a chinese inch thick. The tip of the knife spiraled in neat curls. The knife handle was also strange. It had four circular, deep, depressions on top of it, ostensible to grip. The forefinger and middle finger depressions metal had another depression right on top of it in the metal. Right where you would to hold the handle, the end of the knife handle had a dark green precious stone protruding out. The protruding part was circular. The whole handle emitted an intense green light. As time passed, the green light continue to converge.

The knife was resplendent. It was so wonderful that Nian Bing could not help but mumble, "The Free Wind's Gentle Hymn – the Proud Sky Knife. As expected, it is a good knife!"

Xue Ji seemed to have anticipated his surprise. He smiled while explaining, "The Humming Wind Stone is the most precious spot of the knife, but the body of the knife is also made of a high

quality material. It's forged out of Free Wind Green Metal. This material was able to match with the Humming Wind Stone to form this Proud Sky Knife. The Proud Sky knife has a soul of its own. Although you are not a wind mage, if you use your strength to swing it, it can gather the wind element contained in its body to form an ordinary wind blade. Although it won't be that threatening to high level warriors, it will be difficult for an ordinary warrior to block it. As a mage, you only need some time to resist so you can cast a spell. Of course, this is just the Proud Sky's knife auxiliary use. The most important thing is that it can display faster speeds when you use your almost god-like knife skills. If you have it, when you make that Nine Mysterious Green Dragons Hidden in Clouds of Ice, you can at least reduce the time by half. A famous knife suits a famous chef. Since you do not hold your master's True Sun Knife in your hand, this Proud Sky Knife suits you. In terms of quality, I dare to say that Proud Sky is definitely not below True Sun. It may be even better in particular areas."

Long Zhi moved close to Xue Ji's side, looking at the dark green precious stone. He spoke while sighing, "Such a pity, such a pity. This Humming Wind Stone has already been fused completely with the metal of the knife, their auras intertwined. The knife soul and stone are truly one, otherwise it wouldn't be able to display the special characteristics of the Humming Wind Stone. If I could use the Humming Wind Stone to make a wand, perhaps in twenty years, I could become a Descended God! Big brother, It's a good thing that you didn't show it off in front of me. If you had, I might've really thought of ways to dig out the Humming Wind Stone and make a wand."

Xue Ji gave a slight smile and said, "Geez, you. The Wind Green Metal is so hard that even if you used a rank 10 magic the stone

wouldn't come free. Even if you had gotten it free, you probably would have no way of finding a matching material to make a wand out of it. The Wind Green Metal, although very good, has edges too sharp to be a wand, and is only suited to becoming a bladed weapon."

Long Zhi smiled, saying, "If a Humming Wind Stone was really made into a wand, it would be God Grade. Anyways, I don't have such an opportunity. It's a pity Nian Bing isn't a wind mage. If he was, as a chef familiar with the properties of the knife, he would definitely be able to display the Humming Wind Stone's might. This knife displays the same might as a magic staff. Honestly speaking, giving this knife to Nian Bing makes me feel like somebody was wronged....."

Xue Ji smiled slightly and said, "How can someone be wronged. Although Nian Bing's magic power is not the wind type, he is very familiar with magic elements. He can display at least a little bit of the power. What's more, I gave him this knife only for him to use as a kitchen knife, not as a magic staff! Nian Bing, won't you try it out?"

It would simply be impossible to say that the Proud Sky Knife held not a whit of allure for Nian Bing. This knife was more precious than the True Sun Knife, which didn't have the Fire God Stone inlayed into it. It was also not worse than Morning Dew. The quality of the knife itself was already enough to make Nian Bing's heart tremble. Walking to Xue Ji's side, he reached a hand into the box. He had yet to make contact the knife when the strong wind element had already sent a slightly clean and clear feeling through his body. When he grabbed the knife handle and the depressions, it matched his hand completely. The knife separated from the

brocade box and suddenly Nian Bing felt like his hand was wrapped in a faint wind. His wrist trembled slightly, and the knife immediately transformed into a blur. When the faint wind around his wrist trembled, the knife made his own speed faster. Until now, Nian Bing's own speed at which he handled the knife had reached a limit, but if he had the Proud Sky knife, the limit would be broken through. As long as he matched well, doubling his speed would be entirely possible.

The Ice and Fire Source inside his body's strength seemed to be affected by the Wind Element, spinning faster. But it didn't show a rejection. After all, no matter whether it be ice or fire, neither of them had any compatibility with wind.

With the Proud Sky Knife, Xue Ji's eye strength couldn't see the number of green knife images. He spoke with a satisfied tone, "It definitely suits you very well. As a true outstanding chef, how can you not have a good knife that suits you? You are a magic chef. This Proud Sky knife is most suited to you. I hope that the Free Wind's Hymn can, in your hands, sing even more happily."

Nian Bing nodded his head and said, "As expected, it's a good knife. "But I can't take it." While saying this, he placed the Free Wind's Gentle Hymn back into lead-lined box.

Xue Ji's brows creased. He said, "Didn't you feel that it suited you? Why don't you want it?"

Nian Bing said, "Uncle, Nian Bing has received your kind intentions, but this knife is too precious. Moreover, it is passed down as a treasure in Uncle's family. It's price cannot be assessed.

I really cannot take it.”

Xue Ji smiled. “Still not greedy in the face of treasure. Good, as expected, you are no doubt the disciple of Demon Chef. That’s fine, I will not give this knife to you. However, since I don’t have any use for it, can I sell it to you?”

“Sell?” Hearing these words, Nian Bing’s heart could not help but jump. He really, really liked this knife, a treasure that could increase his hand speed. Feeling him out, Nian Bing asked, “How much are you selling it for?” He of course understood that this grade of treasure was priceless.

Xue Ji smiled slightly and said, “It’s for sale then. It’s one hundred thousand purple gold coins. On top of that you must personally stay at our Pure Wind House as the head chef for a month. I will then sell the Free Wind’s Gentle Hymn to you.”

“One hundred thousand purple gold coins?” Xue Ji, Nian Bing, Long Ling, and Long Ji could not help but simultaneously exclaim in surprise.

Long Ji smiled bitterly, saying, “Even if I sold the Mage Association, I am afraid it would still be worth less.” It should also be known, that normally purple-gold coins were rarely used. Normally gold coins were used in circulation. A hundred thousand purple gold coins was equal to one million gold coins!

Xue Ji smiled slightly and said, “How about it? Do you think it is expensive? Of course, if Nian Bing stays at the Pure Wind House

for five years, then he will also obtain the knife.”

Notes:

1] Means to have sentimental attachment

Chapter 26.2 – The Free Wind’s Gentle Hymn

‘A conspiracy, this is absolutely a conspiracy.’ Resentment soared in Long Zhi’s heart as he looked at Xue Ji who appeared immeasurably crafty. At the time he proposed to gift the knife to Nian Bing, he had certainly taken into account Nian Bing’s refusal. ‘Truly an old fox!’ “Correct! The value of the Humming Wind Stone was around 100,000 purple-gold coins. Even having Nian Bing work five years for the knife is completely worth it. However, the Association needs Nian Bing. Big Brother Xue, can you stop making things difficult for you younger brother?”

Xue Ji lightly smiled and responded, “Brother Long, don’t misunderstand. I want him to help me, but I’m not asking him to stay at the Pure Wind House all day long. You should know that Ming Yuan hasn’t been doing much cooking lately. If Nian Bing agrees to help us, he will also receive the same treatment as Ming Yuan. Every day, he need only come during the evening or later. For the rest of his time, he can stay at the Association. These conditions cannot be regarded as bad. Besides, five years is not a very long time.” When he had revealed the price, Xue Ji had already anticipated that Nian Bing wouldn’t have 100,000 purple-gold coins to buy the knife.

Long Zhi had nothing to say. If he was in Nian Bing’s shoes, he would certainly choose to work five years. After all, it was an extremely rare opportunity to acquire such an exceptionally precious knife, especially since Xue Ji would absolutely not give out such a great price to anyone. Unfortunately, he was not Nian Bing. It was correct to say Nian Bing was very fond of the Free Wind’s Gentle Hymn. However, he already had in his possession of the Morning Dew Knife that was no less overbearing than the Proud Sky Knife. Besides, the ice attribute of Morning Dew was

more compatible with Nian Bing. Furthermore, it was possible for him to reach the same level of compatibility with his other knife, the True Sun Knife. So, his desire for the Proud Sky Knife was not as intense as someone else. Moreover, he did have the capital to afford something as expensive.

Nian Bing opened his mouth and with a calm smile and said, “I do want this knife and I know that its true value is far greater than the price Uncle gave me. I understand that Uncle wants to give me the opportunity to have it. If I was ungrateful, I wouldn’t have the audacity to become your friend.”

Xue Ji was in exultation. “Good! So you mean to say, you agree to work for us for five years? Rest assured, you will be paid a fair wage. As long as you are there, Pure Wind House will certainly prosper. Even after your five year agreement ends, if you weary of the outside world, Pure Wind House will always remain your home. In the future, you can retire to our restaurant. The words I have said represent Pure Wind House, even after Jing’er takes over my position, she will still abide to these promises.”

Nian Bing lightly smiled and replied, “Uncle, I think you misunderstood. I really want that knife, but it’s not the kind of desire you had imagined. I will pay 100,000 purple-gold coins and work for the Pure Wind House for a month, like the first condition you previously mentioned.”

Xue Ji froze before he asked, “You have 100,000 purple-gold coins? Don’t tell this was given to you by Senior Demon Chef?”

Nian Bing shook his head and said, “No, that’s not it. Although

master gave me many things, as a man, there was no way I could use someone else's money to buy the things I want. I will rely on my own resources to obtain the Free Wind's Gentle Hymn. Even though I don't currently have 100,000 purple-gold coins, if I could exchange some of my possessions to reach that value, it should be possible."

The situation had exceed Xue Ji's expectations. He couldn't help but frown before asking, "What do you want to trade for the Free Wind's Gentle Hymn?"

Nian Bing slightly smiled once again. "Uncle, I believe you're quite knowledgeable about magic. If we were to put a price on a precious magic scroll, would a rank 11 Soul Subduing magic scroll be worth 100,000 purple-gold coins?"

Xue Ji nodded before answering, "I'm afraid that a rank 11 magic scroll is more expensive than that. However, as far as I know even the honorable Ice and Snow Goddess' Worshipper couldn't manufacture magic scroll above rank 10. Don't tell me you have one?"

Nian Bing shook his head. "No, I don't have any, but I can create scrolls. Although I cannot make it as high of a level as a rank 11 scroll, I can make a scroll that is just as valuable. I want to give you the ten scrolls I've made these last three months of which I'm the most proud of. I think they should be worth the same as two rank 11 scrolls. This is my sincerity to you."

Xue Ji was somewhat doubtful when he said, "Nian Bing, I don't want to doubt you, but you're only a Great Mage. As far as I know,

a Great Mage can only create rank 4 scrolls, and the chance of success is very low. There is still a big difference of seven ranks between the two scrolls. As for the price of a rank 4 scroll...”

Nian Bing smiled and interrupted Xue Ji. “You’re correct to say that I’m only a Great Mage. However, I can make rank 6 scrolls. The reason why I determine the value of my scrolls higher than the average is because of a certain characteristic of my scrolls. The power displayed by my scrolls will absolutely amaze you. The most valuable thing about my scrolls is that no one else can recreate them, even if that person was the Ice Goddess’ Great Worshiper. Unless I divulge the method of production, no one could develop the method or reach my mastery.” In order to obtain the Proud Sky Knife, Nian Bing no longer able to conceal the secret he discovered through his recent studies.

Xue Ji smiled. “Nian Bing, I believe you. I want to see with my own eyes why Long Zhi attaches so much importance to you. My magic doesn’t reach the same level of accomplishment as you, but you forget about something important. We, in the Xue Family, all use martial skills to protect ourselves. Even if you have a formidable magic scroll, we don’t have any use for them. Could it be that you want me to take them and exchange them for money? If you believe you can produce something so valuable why don’t you sell it yourself?”

Nian Bing calmly responded, “Because I still don’t want outsiders to know about the secrets of these scrolls. Therefore, I don’t wish to sell them. I would rather use them to exchange for the Proud Sky Knife. Since I dare to initiate this trade, I have already taken everything into consideration. The biggest advantage of the scrolls I made is that they can be used by anyone. As long as I teach them,

any child could deploy the full power of the scroll.”

“WHAT?!” Xue Ji and Long Zhi shouted at the same time and looked at each other. ‘This is impossible.’

Nian Bing faintly smiled and took out a scroll from near his chest. It was a magic scroll made by using the most low level material. He gave the scroll to Xue Ji and said with a smile. “We should try out the scroll. Seeing with your own eyes will prove everything. Miss Xue Jing, please activate the scroll towards the ceiling following my instructions.”

Xue Jing blanked and asked, “How do I activate it?”

Nian Bing replied, “You only need to hold the scroll and activate the scroll by opening it. You only have to make sure to picture your target and you will activate it.”

Xue Jing’s eyes exposed a surprise look. Following Nian Bing’s words, she slowly opened the scroll. An bizarre scene appeared. When the scroll completely unfolded, it suddenly transformed into white mist with a Poff! Suddenly, ten ice blades appeared and turned into ten bright lights shooting towards the ceiling. Just when everyone was still immersed in shock, the ten ice blades suddenly exploded into ice mist at the same time and condensed into a big ice sphere.

Although Long Zhi had already heard Long Ling say that Nian Bing could make fusion scrolls, it was the first time he had seen it with his own eyes. He couldn’t help being shocked to the point

that his jaw dropped. This was something major! A scroll that could be used and activated by someone without magic power like Xue Jing was a pioneering type of work. That value of such scrolls could overturn the world. If it was sold to the royal families, nobles, and officials, the potential market would certainly be enormous. Who wouldn't want to have such a high quality life-saving scroll?

Nian Bing's gaze shifted to the somewhat sluggish Xue Ji. He asked with a smile, "Uncle, you saw what my scroll is capable of doing. If you have ten of these scrolls by your side, your life and Miss Xue Jing's life would be secure. It's a very good item to guarantee your safety anywhere. Of course, rest assured, when I offered to give you those scrolls, I would certainly give you scrolls with two rank 6 spells. I can explain to you what the effects of those scrolls are, so that when you meet with danger, all you need to do is to open the scroll and protect yourself from harm."

Xue Ji bitterly smiled while shaking his head. "Nian Bing, although I don't know how much trouble it was to make this, I can guess the value of those scrolls from Little Brother Long's reaction. The 10 scrolls with two rank 6 spells, if sold, could fetch at least 100,000 purple-gold coins. However, as you must know, what I want is not those scrolls. What I really wish for is your help with Pure Wind House."

Nian Bing saw the longing in Xue Ji's eyes and said with a dry smile, "Although the Proud Sky Knife is a treasure, the price for my freedom is very high. I can't sacrifice my freedom for five years just to obtain Free Wind's Gentle Hymn. For me, five years is too long. The truth is, if it wasn't because of a special circumstance, I would have long left Ice Snow City. My master once told me, 'Eight

years of training, eight years of comprehending.’ Only after traveling throughout the continent for eight years will I have the ability to comprehend cooking. I hope you can understand my plight. If you don’t wish to trade, then I also won’t force you. I will still be a friend of Pure Wind House.”

Xue Ji sighed. “Those words of yours are like a splash of cold water on me. I, Xue Ji, will not renege the words I have said. After you make the scrolls, you can directly teach their use to my daughter. I think those ten scrolls will become Jing’er’s dowry in the future. When will you be ready to go work at Pure Wind House? Although it’s only for a month, I still want to employ you at my restaurant, I think you won’t refuse this little arrangement of mine.”

Nian Bing smiled with confidence. “If your arrangement also includes letting me compare notes with the other chefs, then this is exactly what I was searching for. How can I refuse? However, I hope the chefs you find will not be too bad, otherwise it will be very hard to motivate me. I’ll start helping tomorrow and I’ll be at the Pure Wind House every evening.

Xue Ji nodded and delivered the brocade case to Nian Bing. “Right now, although you have yet to complete your end of the deal, I will give you the knife to use first. I believe in your integrity. Honestly speaking, your words really save me a lot of trouble. There are many things that do not need to be said clearly. Right now, I understand clearly why our Ice Snow City’s Wise Girl lost to you. Jing Jing, let’s go.”

Xue Jing seemed very happy. She wasn’t the least resentful that

their heirloom knife was going to become Nian Bing's possession. Her beautiful eyes were wandering around before plainly settling on Nian Bing. "Well then, see you tomorrow. When you come, I'll help find a uniform for you."

Xue Ji and Xue Jing left leaving Nian Bing with the heavy brocade box in his hands. He was very happy about his new acquisition. Although the Proud Sky Knife's usefulness was inferior to the Morning Dew Knife, he currently needed to hide Morning Dew's aura and didn't have another good knife to use at the moment. He always regretted this, but then came the Proud Sky Knife. It was a timely surprise which would make up for his lack of useable knives. Nian Bing firmly believed that with this knife, he would now be able to step further down the road of cooking. Previously, he didn't dare to practice his knife techniques, but presently he could start to train his techniques.

Long Zhi's eyes glinted as he looked at Nian Bing. He sighed and said, "I must confess, just a moment ago, I was really scared that you would agree to that five year agreement. However, I had no right to ask you to refuse. Nian Bing, I find that the more I look at you, the less I can see through you. In the end, I wonder how the inside of your brain works? After arriving here, you unravelled the mysteries of magic one by one. I know there will be a day when you will leave this city. I will not stop you from leaving. I only hope that when you leave you will always remember what I said before: you will always be a part of the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association. It will be enough if you remember that."

Nian Bing nodded and responded, "President, be at ease. Since I became a member of the Association, I will always be a part of the Association. You have helped me greatly, I will certainly repay

your kindness. I think I'll go back to study and stop taking up your time."

Long Zhi replied, "Then I will not disturb you. If you need anything, just tell Ling'er. I will try to satisfy your needs as much as I can." When he was done talking, he immediately left with Long Ling in tow.

Nian Bing picked up the book he had been reading earlier and resumed his reading as if nothing happened. The brocade box was put beside him as he continued to study. Regarding magic arrays, as Nian Bing researched them in depth, he discovered more and more how they were very profound and mysterious. Those arrays were something he needed the most.

Long Ling followed after her father, leaving the library. When Long Zhi saw there was no one around, he whispered, "Ling'er, I want to talk with you about something."

Long Ling was surprise and asked, "Father, what is it that you want to talk with me about? If I can do something for you, just tell me."

Long Zhi sighed and said, "Right now, I discovered more and more that Nian Bing is not as simple as he appears. He surprised me more than I want to admit. This kind of genius is what our Association needs. If he can represent our Association and participate in the Rising Mage Tournament that occurs once every three years, then the position of our Ice Moon Empire Mage Association will certainly change. Unfortunately, I'm afraid that he won't agree when it's time! At first, I wanted to let you

participate, but ever since Nian Bing arrived, I had to change my plans.”

Long Ling’s eyebrows lifted. “Father, although we can participate in the next Rising Mage Assembly, it was always as the Ice God’s Pagoda’s subordinate. In front of the Ice God’s Pagoda’s disciples, we were never able to display anything!”

Chapter 27.1 – Trigger Magic Arrays

Long Zhi shook his head and said, “No, it won’t be the same. The Rising Mage Tournament has very stringent requirements. Participants need to be under twenty-five years old. Even if the Ice God’s Pagoda Faction fields a participant, they won’t necessarily get first place every time. After all, it’s hard for young mages to have great strength. But Nian Bing is different. With the Association’s extensive resources and a year to spare, who knows how many levels he’ll be able to rise in the future? There is a good possibility he could soar into the sky. If he nabs first place, our Association would also bring pride to the empire. At that moment, if the Ice God’s Pagoda wanted to suppress us, it would no longer be that easy.”

Long Ling spoke doubtfully, “You should tell these things to Nian Bing! What’s the use of saying them to me?”

Long Zhi smiled slightly and said, “Of course there’s a use. Ling’er, since your mother passed away, it was always Father who raised you. Honestly, you are the treasure of Father’s heart. Father puts a great importance on the Association, but to me, you are definitely an existence equal to the Association. I am going to ask you a question, and you need to answer me truthfully. Do you like Nian Bing?”

Long Ling never thought that her father would ask such a question. Her pretty face immediately flushed scarlet. She shyly lowered her head, her hands fiddling with the lapels of her jacket. No words would come out.

Long Zhi smiled slightly and said: “What’s going on? You’re not saying anything? Could it be that even a handsome youth like Nian Bing does not attract my daughter? Darling daughter, your standards can’t be too high. Think about it, if you marry Nian Bing, it’ll be easy for you to eat lots of things.”

“It isn’t that, Father.” Long Ling lowered her head, stammering. “Father, Nian Bing is truly, truly outstanding, but, we’ve only known each other for a short amount of time. How could I say if I like or don’t like him? Don’t pressure Ling’er!”

Long Zhi laughed and said, “Okay, okay. I won’t pressure you. I will go and find Luo Rou for a chat and see if she is interested in Nian Bing.”

“No.” Long Ling anxiously raised her head to look at her father. “Father, don’t do it! I, I.....”

Long Zhi looked at his daughter with the shadow of a smile and said, “What’s this, is Ling’er going to speak the truth?”

Long Ling’s tone was annoyed as she spoke, “Father, you are really horrible. Fine, I’ll admit that I do have a favorable impression of Nian Bing. However, you also saw it he doesn’t care about anything other than magic and cooking.”

Long Zhi let out a sigh and said, “It’s enough if you like him. Everything else is easy to handle. Although Father is a bit utilitarian, I wouldn’t make my daughter marry someone she doesn’t love. Ling’er, remember Father’s words. You must rely on

yourself to fight for happiness. If you like Nian Bing, don't give up. Moreover, make your move soon. If you can grab his heart, then all the other problems will be solved as easily as bamboo splits at the knife's edge. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

Long Ling lowered her head again. "But, Father, I am a girl after all. Could it be that you want me to reveal these thoughts to him?"

Long Zhi shook his head, and smiled while saying: "Of course that's not it. Just influencing him secretly is enough. After all, you spend all day together. Nian Bing is not an idiot. I think, that with my daughter being so beautiful, there's no way he wouldn't notice you. However, at the crucial moments, you can also prod him a bit. The way I see it, that girl Xue Jing also has some feelings for Nian Bing. If Xue Ji, that old fox, pushes the waves and adds to the billows¹, it will be hard to say what will happen. You can't be thinking of giving the person you love to your friend, can you?"

Long Ling looked somewhat blankly at her Father. "I, I don't know."

Long Zhi smiled bitterly. "Ai, never mind. All these careful calculations and intrigues will be one's downfall. ² Adding on, I may also be too utilitarian. You young people nevertheless pay attention to fate. I'll go with what you want. However, Father still hopes that you can persuade Nian Bing to represent our association in participating in the Rising Mage Tournament a year from now. Other matters can wait till later."

Long Ling nodded her head and said, "Father, I will try my

hardest. Right now however, I can't make any assurances to you, because I don't know what Nian Bing is thinking. One year might be too long, but I will definitely try my hardest. I hope that the Association's circumstances can improve. I will take my leave first."

Long Zhi nodded his head and said, "Go. In the evening, I will bring the white scrolls we bought. Nian Bing has need of them."

Nian Bing turned the pages of the book in his hands. Right now, it was already late at night. Long Ling was sitting not too far from him, meditating. After he turned the final page of the book that introduced all kinds of profound magic arrays, Nian Bing was disappointed. Although the magic arrays recorded in this book weren't bad, it was worse than what he had expected. It also didn't have the information he sought the most.

Sighing as he moved to close the book, he discovered that there was a special symbol on the final page of the magic book. It was clearly a magic symbol, one of the symbols used to draw magic arrays. The symbol represented concealment.

Nian Bing's heart jumped. He condensed his magic power, and carefully drew out the magic symbol.

A faint blue light sparkled. As he made the final stroke, the last page of the magic book was suddenly washed in ice blue. The handwriting on the page started to change, the original symbol and

words changing completely.

“Magic arrays work by connecting to the heaven and earth. The balance of the heaven and earth contains the element of every kind of magic, and can be utilized by mages. But, as mages, we will always suffer losses in close combat. When meeting a strong martial arts cultivator in a one-on-one situation, it is very difficult to achieve victory. To counter this kind of situation, magic arrays can be altered into a special form . To supplement a scroll’s magic, you can draw this special array onto the scroll. This kind of array is called a trigger. This trigger means that when the holder of the magic scroll encounters a certain degree of attack, the scroll will automatically activate while protecting the user. The degree of the attack required can be set in the trigger array. Please study the uses on your own. Be especially aware that these arrays need to be added to magic scrolls that are already completed. If the add-on fails, the scroll will be rendered useless, so please use this method cautiously.”

Reading this, Nian Bing’s heart suddenly sprung to life. He finally understood why mages, when they reached the Magic Scholar level, were no longer scared of confrontations with martial artists. It wasn’t because the ability of the mage suddenly became stronger. Rather, it was because of the existence of these trigger magic arrays! In a case that there was an enemy who sneak attacked a mage, as long as there was one of these special scrolls on the mage’s person, it would neutralize the danger. This would give the mage enough time to chant a spell. It was good stuff, really good stuff. Thanks to Nian Bing being very mindful, he found this. If he hadn’t been, this wonderful magic array would’ve slipped away.

Thinking this, Nian Bing immediately threw himself into further studying. This kind of special magic array was extremely difficult to draw. Not only did it require an extremely high level of magic control, it simultaneously required a large amount of magic power to support. Drawing a trigger magic array was actually more difficult than drawing a rank 6 magic scroll.

What Nian Bing didn't know was that this kind of magic array was not used very extensively. Although each empire's Mage Association had record of these, due to the magic array being especially hard to make, the low success rate scared people. Magic scrolls were extremely precious. Who would use high level magic scrolls to test trigger magic arrays? That was too much of a waste. Therefore, even if they could make one, it would only be with low ranking magic, so the practice was abandoned by most mages early on.

Magic scholars were able to contend against martial artists mainly because of receiving Mage Association support. Once a mage reached the Magic Scholar realm, they would often carry a lot of magic goods. This was the Mage Association's necessary protection for high level mages. Among these goods, using early warning magic goods were the most popular. Of course, their price was also the most expensive. With these kinds of magic goods, mages could anticipate the arrival of danger and make preparations in response. Even if the sneak attacker was very strong, Magic Scholars and those in realms above would also often have strong magic scrolls to protect themselves. After using the magic scrolls to fight for time, they could chant strong magic. This was the true reason they could contend against martial artists. Of course, in ordinary situations, mages would seldom travel alone unless necessary. They would always have martial artists accompany them. If a mage absolutely insisted on going solo,

besides very conceited mages, they would choose to dress casually to belie their true status. Of course, this action had to be done in secret. If not, they would be laughed at by their peers.

Nian Bing's research was not actually about drawing magic arrays, but rather, direct research on the principles of this kind of trigger magic array. Only by becoming familiar with the magic array symbols and carefully studying the principles of the trigger magic array could he fully understand the theory. There was no point in mechanically memorizing how to use the array. He had to make it his own in order to use it with more flexibility. He concentrated his attention on time-consuming research. When he finally understood everything, it was already light outside. Exhaustion struck his whole body, but his research had bore fruit, which made Nian Bing's mood extremely cheerful.

“Eat something.” Long Ling's voice roused Nian Bing who was immersed in his happiness. He turned his head only to see Long Ling standing at his side, a tray in her hands. Squatting down gracefully, she carefully laid the tray on the ground. The tray bore two mantou, 3, a heap of stewed meat, and one bowl of congee. Long Ling spoke in a rebuking tone, “Yet another night with no sleep. Don't tell me these magic resources are so attractive to you?”

Nian Bing extended an arm to grab a mantou, but had his hand slapped by Long Ling. “Your hands are dirty. Clean your hands and face first before eating.” While saying this, she took a soft towel and passed it to Nian Bing.

The moist towel was very soothing in his hands. It exuded a faint fragrance. Nian Bing looked at Long Ling and he suddenly felt very

warm. It was an indescribable feeling. “Ling’er, thank you. These past few days, you’ve always taken care of me.”

Long Ling smiled slightly and said, “We are friends! What’s more, the success of your research will be very advantageous for our Association. Nian Bing, the way to gather my spirit that you taught me was very useful. I can clearly feel that recently, the strength of my magic control has increased. Thank you.”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said: “What are you thanking me for? That is all because of your hard work.” Using the towel to wipe his face and hands clean, Nian Bing immediately felt like his spirit had recovered. After a night of no sleep, his stomach was already growling. He hadn’t felt it before, but when his spirit relaxed, his stomach was almost crying out. Gobbling like a wolf and swallowing like a tiger, Nian Bing quickly cleaning out the tray. Although the food was not all that delicious, the feeling of eating was especially sweet.

“Slow down, we don’t want you to choke. Actually, the way you eat is bad. You don’t have any discipline. Nian Bing, you should relax more. You have time, why is there a need to be anxious?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said: “There’s no way I won’t be anxious! After learning all the Association has to offer and carrying out my agreement with Uncle Xue Ji, I will leave here. Lingering too long at a place is not advantageous for me. My ambition is to travel to the world – after all “reading ten thousand books is not equal to traveling ten thousand miles.” Right now, my world view is too narrow.”

Long Ling's heart quivered. "Nian Bing, do you have to go? Actually, Ice Snow City....."

Nian Bing lowered his head. He couldn't look into Long Ling's expressive eyes. He nodded his head, and spoke firmly: "I must definitely go. When my master passed away, I promised him that I would become the greatest chef. I have comprehended cooking for eight years, but I have merely just took the first step into cooking. Ling'er, thank you for always caring about me but a real man must aspire to travel far and make one's mark. Perhaps one day I will tire and return."

Long Ling couldn't help but let it slip. "Then I will wait for you."

Nian Bing's whole body jolted. Raising his head he looked into her gentle eyes and saw much. "Ling'er, don't be like that, okay? I don't know when I will return, or if I can return. I understand your intentions but I cannot hold up your life. Just regard me as a transient passerby in your life. With your temperament, you can definitely find someone who better suits you."

Long Ling bit her lip. She took the tray and slowly stood up. In a low voice, she said, "I understand. It's because I don't suit you."

"No." Nian Bing stood, holding her shoulders with both hands. "It's me who doesn't suit you. "Ling'er, the only way that I wouldn't be moved by you is if I had a heart of stone. Right now however, I cannot have any sort of companion. I still have many things to do. I don't even know what I will be doing in the future. Right now, I can't discuss relationships; that is too much of a luxury for me."

Notes:

[1\]](#) Encourages ↵

[2\]](#) This is half of a phrase 机关算尽太聪明, 反算了卿卿性命, from one of China's Four Great Classical Novels, Dream of the Red Chamber.

[3\]](#) Type of steamed bun

Chapter 27.2 – Trigger Magic Arrays

Long Ling felt the heat from Nian Bing's big hand. "Could it be that in your heart, there is only cooking and magic?"

Nian Bing nodded before he spoke, "That's right. In my heart, I only have cooking and magic. Everything else must be filtered out since I must fully concentrate in order to achieve success."

Long Ling sighed, not letting her tears fall from her eyes. She didn't blame Nian Bing. After all, everyone had different goals and aspirations. Unlike men, the lifelong dream of a girl was undoubtedly finding a good home. Some people would be bound to mediocrity for their entire life while others would aspire to higher skies. Nian Bing was clearly one of the latter variety. He had many big dreams and goals.

Long Ling immediately left, leaving Nian Bing who looked gloomily at the bookshelves around him with his heart in discomfort. He rejected a kindhearted and beautiful young woman. It wasn't something that anyone would feel comfortable with. With his heart in disarray, an expression of despair suddenly flitted through his eyes. His whole body shook strongly as he involuntarily blurted out, "Mother, mother, I'm wrong. I shouldn't worry about these things. The Ice God's Pagoda is my target!" Despair painted his expression as he recalled the bitter memories of his past-his mother's stare as she breathed her last. Nian Bing took a deep breath and pushed away all the distracting thoughts that put his mind in disarray. He sat cross-legged and started to meditate.

From morning to noon, from noon to night, Nian Bing spent the whole day cultivating. It was only through meditation that he was able to regain a calm mind. His Ice and Fire magic source became more concentrated through meditation. Although his progress was extremely slow, the two magics were still circulating steadily. That ingenious whirlpool inside him slowly merged the two magics together, intertwining without conflict. That was the might of the Ice and Fire magic source. Nian Bing raised his head and finally looked at the color of the sky outside. Outside, the day was slowly fading away into night. Inside the library, the magic lamps were about to be lit. Nian Bing took out two rank 4 magic scrolls from his chest pocket. These scrolls were made by him and were his proudest creations to date. He slowly opened the scroll. A blue magic power poured into the scroll, and without stopping, a light blue ray shot out and intertwined on top of the scroll. The blue light continuously flickered as it produced a wonderful pattern, seemingly without end. There was a magic array inserted inside the scroll. That work had been gradually completed by Nian Bing. With the perception of his spirit power, Nian Bing clearly knew that the scroll in his hand possessed an efficient trigger. One whole night of research, as well as a whole day of meditation, allowed him to grasp the technique to create a scroll that could trigger magic arrays. However, Nian Bing was very clear that his discovery was a fluke. The kind of scroll that could trigger magic arrays was extremely difficult to complete. Even if he understood the underlying theory, reality was another thing. He had made errors countless times before getting to this result.

He got up while carefully putting the scroll back inside his clothes before picking up the brocade case from the floor. He quickly tidied his appearance before quietly leaving the library.

Except for Long Ling coming to deliver him his lunch at noon,

she did not make any appearances. Nian Bing knew that he had deeply wounded her heart, although she didn't say anything about it. It was also good if they didn't see each other in order to avoid getting caught deeper in this.

Just when he left the Mage Association, a carriage stopped in front of him. When Nian Bing saw the carriage driver, he recognized him as the old man who had been driving Xue Jing's carriage at the night of Luo Rou's birthday banquet. Xue Jing's head stuck out from the carriage. "Hey! Great Chef, get on the carriage. Father sent me to pick you up. I have been waiting for you for an hour already. You are really slow!"

Nian Bing was inwardly laughing bitterly. This is truly... a wave that has yet to recede, yet another one has come. Long Ling already understood his intentions whereas this Mad Girl couldn't be sent away. Hopefully, she still hated him a lot. It's a pity that she liked Yan Feng who was unexpectedly a YanHua. Otherwise, their relationship would take Xue Jing's concentration away from him. "Thank you for your trouble, Miss Xue. I truly do not dare to accept such an honor!" Although he had uttered those words, he still got on the carriage.

Xue Jing sat beside Nian Bing with a very sweet smile on her face. " 'I do not dare' ? Since when were you so polite? Are you trying to bully me this time?"

Nian Bing bitterly smiled and said, "Didn't I already explain everything clearly? Miss Xue Jing, can't you let me off? There really is no grudges that exist between us."

Xue Jing faintly smiled before replying, “Let you go...ah! I’ll think about it. Anyway, let’s change the way we call each other. I call you by your name since you already called my father ‘uncle’. So, you can call me Jing’er or Jing Jing. We also can be considered friends, which means I won’t refuse this little request of forgiveness.. I saw you call Ling’er before and it felt quite close!”

Nian Bing didn’t think much about it and hurriedly said, “Good then! I promise you Jing Jing. In the future, there is no need to send a carriage to pick me up. I will go to Pure Wind House myself. It’s also a good way to exercise my muscles and body.”

Xue Jing happily laughed and responded, “Exercising your muscles? You can exercise all you want at night.” Her face immediately flushed red as she realized what she had said.

Nian Bing pretended he didn’t understand the accidental innuendo. “Exercises at night? Tonight, Uncle might not give me any time, won’t it be difficult to exercise then?”

Xue Jing adorably stuck out her tongue before saying, “It shouldn’t be difficult. Father has invited the Grand Pavilion’s boss to come. At the same time, they have also issued a challenge against each other.”

A glint flashed through Nian Bing’s eyes. “A battle against the Grand Pavilion’s chef? Good! That was exactly what I was hoping for.” An intense amount of fighting spirit erupted from Nian Bing’s body. In the dim carriage, his eyes, flickering with confidence, seemed like two cold stars in the night. As he touched the brocade case laying on his legs containing Proud Sky Knife, he

said, “Today, I’ll test the capabilities of this knife.”

Sensing an ice-cold aura coming from Nian Bing, Xue Jing’s heart trembled. Ah! Such strong confidence! At first, she had believed that the challenge arranged by her father would cause Nian Bing some difficulty, but she didn’t expected that Nian Bing would so readily agree to the challenge. Furthermore, he was very excited by the idea. She naturally didn’t understand the mind of a chef. To any expert, the most difficult thing was to find inspiration or enlightenment. If given the opportunity, how could Nian Bing not be excited? The reason why he decided to come to Ice Snow City was to compare with the chefs of Pure Wind House and the Grand Pavilion!

“You seem very confident!” Xue Jing looked at Nian Bing, her heart bursting with warmth.

Nian Bing smiled and said, “Could it be you’re not confident in my abilities? Tell me, what kind of special skills does the Grand Pavilion’s chef have? To be able to contend with the Pure Wind House, his ability should not be below Master Ming’s.”

Xue Jing nodded, before replying, “Of course, there are reasons why the Grand Pavilion became the place that nobles love. It’s not because they offered special services. The main reason is the flavor of the dishes. Their head chef is very young, he is only in his thirties. It’s unclear who his master was, but Uncle Ming once competed with him and the match ended in a draw. It seemed like his specialties were meat dishes. I have no choice but to admit both his dish’s presentation and its fragrance were above Uncle Ming. So, the draw all came down to the judge’s preference.”

Nian Bing nodded. “I heard what you said. That head chef must be trying to master the beautiful way, which implies that he focuses mainly on beautiful presentation and fragrance. Very good. Today, I want to compare with him and see who can put out the most beautiful dish. Jing’er, have you recently seen Yan Feng?”

Xue Jing was startled. She suddenly discovered that ever since she was focused on hating Nian Bing, she had never thought of Yan Feng. “Him? I haven’t see him recently. I am very baffled. Why would he consider you a friend when you had both just met for the first time? From his character, he didn’t seem easy to befriend .”

Nian Bing recalled the way Yan Feng looked at him. His mind suddenly became cold. He bitterly smiled, “Jing’er, let me give you an advice. It’s best for you to give up on him. It’s impossible for you to have any future with him.”

Xue Jing curiously asked, “Why do you say that? Could it be that you’re jealous that I like him?”

“Jealous?” Nian Bing smiled and replied, “That word never encroaches my mind. I’m just saying this for your own good. I don’t make a habit of talking behind people’s back. You will later know what I mean by your future with him being an impossibility.”

Xue Jing snorted. “This is none of your business! If you don’t say it clearly, I will just assume you’re jealous.”

Nian Bing faintly smiled. “Then, let’s say I am jealous. You are such a pretty girl, my jealousy would be quite normal.”

The carriage came to a halt in front of Pure Wind House. Nian Bing discovered with astonishment that the whole street was completely silent. As Xue Jing stepped off the carriage, he also realised that there was no one on the most bustling street in Ice Snow City. Xue Jing smiled and said, “For today’s competition, Father had invited the City Lord and everyone with status to act as a judge. For this competition, both restaurants will be closed temporarily, and soldiers are dispatched to block activities on this street.”

Nian Bing replied with amazement, “Was there a need to make such great fanfare? One day of business for the Pure Wind House and the Grand Pavilion must be an astronomical amount. For just for a simple competition, they close business. Aren’t you afraid of losing money?”

Xue Jing answered, “You really don’t understand. The victor will immediately become the city’s top restaurant and this honor will bring in much greater profits. How can a day’s loss compare to that? Who knows how long the Grand Pavilion has waited for this opportunity to happen. Their Boss has issued a challenge to my father many times, but was refused every time until now. Since the Grand Pavilion’s head chef is young, Uncle Ming once said that within three years, he would inevitably be surpassed. Therefore, to protect the Pure Wind House’s fame, Father has had to refuse their challenges many times. This is why the Grand Pavilion has always oppressed and formed a rivalry with Pure Wind House. However, today, when we can boldly held our head high, you can add oil to the fire!”

Nian Bing nodded before saying, “I will do my best. I am aware that this Free Wind’s Gentle Hymn is not easy to handle. Let’s go in.”

Just when they are about to enter Pure Wind House, Nian Bing immediately felt the imposing atmosphere. From both sides of the passage, there stood servants of the Pure Wind House along with some unfamiliar people in common clothes . He glanced at those people without lifting his eyes as he used his spirit power to examine them. Through it, he discovered that although they were wearing common clothes, their appearance was merely a facade. Every one of them were reserved and all of them were martial arts experts.

The Pure Wind House hall was the same as before, with the exception of a hundred tables that have been rearranged. In addition, there was a long table set up in front and empty chairs behind it. On both ends of the hall, there was a kitchen set up with cooking equipments. On the left side of the kitchens, there were normal cooking tool while on the right side, there were people standing ready.

Xue Jing whispered, “You see, the judges’ table is in the front. You will be cooking on the left side, while the right side will be allocated to your opponent, the head chef of Grand Pavilion. They have already started to set things up. If you need anything, you should hurry and request it. We will immediately ask people to bring it back. Otherwise, you will not have enough time to prepare. You don’t need to worry about the cost or the availability of the ingredients. You need only to say it and I will find it for you.”

Nian Bing nodded. He leaned near Xue Jing's ear and whisper something. Xue Jing's face became progressively more surprised. "You are going to use those? They are very common ingredients!"

Nian Bing faintly smiled and said, "Bringing out the beauty in the ordinary is real skill. You just need to do as I instructed. Rest assured, I know what I'm doing."

Xue Jing nodded and replied, "You should go change into the clothes on the bed of my room. I chose those clothes for you. The competition will start when you return."

Nian Bing glanced at Xue Jing and said, "So I have to enter your room again!"

Xue Jing laughed. "Don't tell me you're afraid? I want to give you some time to prepare. Just go already!" As she finished speaking, she floated away like a red cloud.

Nian Bing watched Xue Jing's excited appearance and knew the grudge between them had disappeared. However, it wasn't a good thing, in his opinion. While he thought about it, he left the hall and walked to Xue Jing's room which was left unlocked. As he entered, the familiar fragrance assailed his nose once again. Nian Bing reached the bed, unable to refrain from remembering the awkwardness of last time when he was hiding with Xue Jing.

A pure white set of clothes was neatly folded on the bed. Nian Bing carefully unfolded it and couldn't be help but be frightened by

the sight of it What kind of chef clothes was this?! This was clearly a luxurious white chang pao with dragons embroidered in silver thread. There were not many dragons, but it was obviously the focal point of the clothes. It made the entire cloth appear sumptuous and elegant. The girdle belt was very simple; it too was white with silver threads lining the ends, leading to an elegant milky white stone that proudly decorated the middle. Although it was not a mutton fat jade, it was smooth to the touch and seemed precious. Is this still considered a chef uniform? This is clearly something a noble son would wear! Although he complained in his heart, Nian Bing still took off his mage gown and put on the silvery-white chang pao.

Chapter 28.1 – Staking The Brilliant Holy Light Stone

The soft cloth made wearing the clothes very comfortable, like they had been custom made for him.

“Nian Bing, is there anything that doesn’t fit?” Xue Jing’s voice was accompanied by the sound of footsteps. A red-clad figure appeared in the doorway of the room. Xue Jing could not help but turn pink when she saw Nian Bing, who had changed into his nice clothes. “Very handsome. I did say that these clothes would suit you. Golden hair and silver clothes, it’s too wonderful.”

Nian Bing forced a smile and said, “Jing’er, these clothes are pretty good, but they don’t seem like something a chef should be wearing. Did you want me to wear this to the competition?”

Xue Jing giggled, saying, “Is there some rule saying you can’t? I think that they’re very nice! In fact, let these clothes be a gift to you. Let’s go, we should go receive guests. Father is already in the main hall. ”

These two people returned to the main hall of the Pure Wind House, where everything was almost set up. Ming Yuan and Xue Ji immediately went to greet Nian Bing when they saw him come. Xue Ji’s eyes sparkled, and he said, “Nian Bing, if I was thirty, forty years old, maybe I would be jealous of you. You’re really good looking!”

Nian Bing forced a smile and said, “Uncle, don’t tease me. I am a

chef. Wearing stuff like this does not seem suited to making food.”

Xue Ji laughed and said, “Don’t worry about it, don’t worry about it. I think it looks very good. This time, I want to make Jin Hao from the Grand Pavilion completely admit defeat. Ai, Lord Marquis has come.”

Everyone’s gaze was directed towards the two people at the entrance.. While bowing in salute, Nian Bing looked out and saw that the two people were dressed in splendid clothing. The first person was a stranger, but Nian Bing recognized the man on the left. He was Luo Rou’s father, manager of the finances of Ice Snow City, the Earl Luo Hao. Lagging behind the person on the right by half a step, his fat face exuded a faint smiling expression. The person on the right looked to be about 40 years old and was very tall and appeared majestic. Although he only wore simple dress clothes, he emitted an imperceptible air of dignity, proof of his unordinary status.

Xue Ji and Ming Yuan immediately went to receive them. “Lord Marquis, welcome to the Pure Wind House. You really cast great splendor onto my humble shack!”

The Marquis smiled slightly and said, “Big Bro Xue, we are friends. There’s no need to be so polite. I’ve waited for this competition for so long. It seems that Chef Ming has some new invention.”

Xue Ji secretly smiled. He said, “Lord Marquis, I would never dare to fight a battle I’m not certain of. Since I dared to raise the challenge, I naturally have some measure of certainty. I would like

to introduce a young talent to you. Nian Bing, come. This is the lord of our Ice Snow City, the Marquis Nuo Ya. Although the Marquis comes from a military background, he is also a connoisseur of fine food. Today, he is acting as the executive judge.”

Nian Bing stepped forward, and bowed lightly. He greeted Nuo Ya, “Commoner Nian Bing pays his respects to the Lord Marquis.”

Nuo Ya looked at Nian Bing, whose bearing was unusually handsome and elegant. His eyes couldn’t help but show a sliver of surprise. “Big Bro Xue! Which family has such a handsome young man as a son?”

Xue Ji laughed slightly and said, “Lord Marquis, please forgive me for my secrecy. You will know later. Please come in and sit.”

Although the marquis still had his suspicions, Xue Ji’s status was not just one of a simple restaurant owner. If he had to offend someone, he definitely would not offend Xue Ji. With the powers behind Xue Ji, one couldn’t afford to offend him, even if he had the status of a marquis. It would be more accurate to say, that except the imperial household, there were very few people who could afford to offend him. Following Xue Ji’s guidance, Marquis Nuo Ya and Earl Luo Hao sat behind a long table. Xue Ji sat alongside them. He said to Luo Hao, “Lord Earl, is Rou’er not coming with you today?”

Luo Hao smiled, saying, “I can’t control that girl, but with the capital as such today, she wouldn’t miss this event. When I was going out, she said she would change clothes and be along shortly.”

Right at this moment, two people came in from outside. Nian Bing was much more familiar with these two. They were Long Zhi and Long Ling, the father daughter pair. Nian Bing immediately went up to greet them. “President, you came too?”

Long Zhi smiled slightly and said, “Besides magic, my other hobby is eating. I am a regular customer at the Pure Wind House. When I heard about today’s competition, even if it wasn’t to give Big Bro Xue some face, I would’ve come to cheer you on! I also wanted to try the tasty dishes from that super chef, who was highly praised even by Big Bro Xue and Ming Yuan.”

Long Ling was still wearing her light blue magic gown. When she saw Nian Bing’s attire, her beautiful eyes sparkled with a trace of distress, making Nian Bing’s heart hurt. He was almost unable to stop himself from asking, but he endured. His mother’s expression of despair reverberated in his mind. In order to become stronger, he definitely could not so easily explore the feelings between men and women.

Xue Ji walked out again to greet Long Zhi. He said, “It’s good that you’ve come. The Lords Marquis and Earl have already come. Let’s go, Judge Long, you should take a seat.”

Nian Bing knew that Long Zhi was one of the judges. With his status as the President of the Mage Association, he was qualified to be a judge. With such great people as judges, Xue Ji had really gone all out. He had entrusted all his hopes to Nian Bing. It seems that in today’s competition, Nian Bing could not lose. This was repaying Xue Ji for the Proud Sky Knife.

Xue Jing had dragged Long Ling off to the side to talk quietly. Nian Bing did not know what he should be doing right now. Ming Yuan walked up next to him, and asked in a low voice, “Nian Bing, what dish are you going to make?”

Nian Bing said, “Master Ming, what kind of requirements or rules does this competition have? This is my first time ever participating.”

Ming Yuan said, “The requirements are simple. Both sides must each make the three dishes they are most confident in within the allotted hour. That’s it. Then the judges will decide on the victor. There is a huge force behind the Grand Pavilion. Their owner, Jin Hao, is the current Ice Moon Empire’s His Majesty the King’s older brother-in-law. His little sister is His Majesty the King’s most beloved imperial concubine. With this level of relationship, except for a dish with an exponentially better taste, the final result will be a tie. Do you get what I’m saying?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “I understand. To keep the balance in the relationship between the Pure Wind House and the Grand Pavilion, Lord Marquis cannot decide the winner of the competition so lightly. Rest assured I will make them accept their loss . In fact, I think I know the three dishes I want to make already.”

Ming Yuan smiled lightly and said, “It’s good that you’ve already grasped that. Today, I will be the sous-chef.” The sous-chef actually acted as an assistant and was responsible for side-dishes and other low level work.

Nian Bing jumped in shock. Immediately, he said, “How is this okay? How can I let you be the assistant? Actually, I believe that your strength is enough to achieve victory.”

Ming Yuan shook his head and said, “Although I have a lot of pride, I also have great knowledge of myself. Last time, the tie was very forced. The head chef of the Grand Pavilion is named Liao Feng and is called the Golden Chef. His forte is in making exceedingly resplendent dishes. He is among the most promising chefs I’ve seen. After a few years of practice, his level will definitely exceed mine. If it was me matched with him, maybe there wouldn’t be a chance to maintain the tie. If this wasn’t the case, why would Owner always try to stall the fight? This time, I will be relying on you. I want to see more of the skills that Senior Demon Chef passed on to you.”

Nian Bing wanted to say something, but Ming Yuan cut him off. Ming Yuan smiled lightly, saying, “Don’t try to refuse this. To be the assistant chef to the successor of the Demon Chef is my honor. Our opponents have arrived.”

Following Ming Yuan’s gaze, Nian Bing saw a line of people coming in from the outer corridor. At the very front were two people. The left person was extremely tall and wore a golden cheongsam that looked exceedingly luxurious. He was fifty or so years old. His eyes were not big, but they glittered with a faint resplendence. Walking in line with him was someone wearing a snow white chef’s outfit. A youth wearing a tall hat. He looked to be around Shi Jiu’s age. Although his appearance was not above Nian Bing’s, he also could be regarded as handsome. The pitiful thing was that his handsome face carried an arrogant air, which

made people unable to look at him. Behind them were the two shopkeepers from the Grand Pavilion, as well as three chefs wearing chef outfits. These people were obviously the assistant chefs.

There was no need for Ming Yuan to introduce them. Nian Bing could guess that the golden-robed person was the Grand Pavilion's owner, Jin Hao, and at his side was the head chef of the Grand Pavilion, Golden Chef Liao Feng.

Jin Hao and his group of people went to the judges to greet them respectfully. Jin Hao said, "Jin Hao and the chefs from the Grand Pavilion pay their respects to the Lords Marquis and Earl." Although he was a relative of the imperial family, he didn't possess an government position, so he maintained his etiquette.

Marquis Nuo Ya and Earl Luo Hao stood. Nuo Ya smiled while speaking, "Brother Jin, there's no need to be polite. Come, take a seat. Today we shall enjoy the dragons battle, and the tigers fight.
[1](#)"

Jin Hao made a noise agreement and walked to the judges' seating. At this time, Liao Feng turned toward Ming Yuan. Upon looking at Ming Yuan, his eyes exuded a provocative light. "Dragons battle, tigers fight? I don't think that will necessarily happen."

Jin Hao admonished him. "Liao Feng, you can't be so mannerless. Go and prepare." Liao Feng made a sound in an agreement. After greeting the people at the judges table, he headed to the cooking counter on his side.

Jin Hao's gaze turned to Xue Ji. Smiling slightly, he said, "Brother Xue, is Master Ming finally okay? We have put off this competition for over a year. It seems that you have some certainty?"

Xue Ji smiled slightly while speaking. "Brother Jin is very courteous. Master Ming's body is in very good condition, but he still suffers from some minor ailments. I'm afraid they might be exacerbated."

Jin Hao laughed aloud and said, "Not a problem, not a problem. Since Master Ming is sick, even if you lose, then you still have this excuse. Anyways, our main focus is to be exchanging notes." Although the words he spoke were beautiful, anyone could see the barbs hidden within.

Xue Ji smiled faintly and said, "Lose? Please teach me how to write this word. I'm a martial artist, my foundations in literature are exceedingly poor."

Jin Hao coldly snorted. He said, "Okay, today I will teach you how to write the word 'lose.' However, Brother Xue, should we hedge some luck on on this competition? So that our two chef's effort won't be in vain." Xue Ji had long been prepared for such words. "What do you want to bet on Brother Jin?"

Jin Hao cast his gaze on Liao Feng, who was busy making preparations. He said, "Not long ago, my insignificant self acquired a precious object. I want to use it to bet Brother Xue's Pure Wind

House. Our Grand Pavilion has resplendence to spare, but not enough elegance. If the two restaurants were combined, that would be a wonderful thing. Brother Xue, how about it?”

Hearing that Jin Hao wanted to bet on the Pure Wind House, Long Zhi, Nuo Ya, and Luo Hao could not help but be shocked. The Pure Wind House was Xue Ji’s life. If Xue Ji lost, it was equivalent to him not being able to continue living in Ice Snow City. Such stakes were really big. Just as they were thinking that Xue Ji wouldn’t answer, Xue Ji opened his mouth. “That’s fine! However, what is Brother Jin going to bet? I have squandered my heart’s blood for half of my life on the Pure Wind House. If you don’t have an equivalent item, I won’t bet. In my eyes, even if it was Brother Jin’s Grand Pavilion, it wouldn’t be enough to fit my standards.”

Jin Hao listened to his retaliation. Coldy, he smiled. He said, “The Grand Pavilion is not enough by your standards? Then please take a look, Brother Xue, to see if this item matches your standards.” While saying this, he stuck his hand into his chest pocket and pulled out a black square shaped box. Upon seeing it, Xue Ji’s face could not help but change slightly; he recognized that the box was made out of lead. A lead box was no doubt used to conceal the item’s radiance, or its ability to use the elements. Since he had previously owned the Proud Sky Knife, he understood this very well.

Jin Hao’s eyes seemed to exude a complacent smile. Slowly, he opened the box. A golden light immediately pierced through the air, filling the entire hall. It was a very pure gold color, and unconsciously filled people with an amiable feeling. In the box was a golden precious stone. It’s light, although dazzling, was not harsh on the eyes. Everyone could clearly see a round gem, a round

gem without any blemishes. The gem was transparent, but filled with a golden light. Every ray of light was very gentle. The golden light illuminated everything and made people relaxed, as if a gentle spring breeze was blowing. The gentle golden light gradually dissipated, except for a ring of golden light centered on the gem that would pulse outwards. From this sight, it was not hard to see the preciousness of the gem.

Other people may be dazzled by the outward appearance of the gem, but Nian Bing, Long Zhi and Long Ling knew otherwise. Because they were mages, they could tell that this gem was emitting a strong magic element that was not inferior to the Humming Wind Stone. It had the power of light. The scarcely seen light element was surging brightly. Except for the aura of darkness, any sort of magic element that came in contact with the light element would give birth to a very amiable feeling.

Notes:

[1\]](#) See a fight between great powers

Chapter 28.2 – Staking The Dazzling Holy Brilliance Stone

Although the level of this stone and the Humming Wind Stone were equal, the fact that light mages were rare made this stone a little bit worse than the Humming Wind Stone in terms of usage. Although very few people could use this stone's magic element to its fullest potential, that did not diminish its value at all. The light aura could not only help people stabilize their emotions, but it could also dispel many kinds of evil auras. If kept on their person, even an ordinary person could increase their resistance against attacks and calm their hearts.

“I purchased this stone from a businessman who was in dire straits. It is called Holy Brilliance, an innate light elemental stone. I have already had someone examine it – this stone is void of other ores and impurities; it is made completely of condensed light element. It could even be said to have been blessed by the heavens. It would be very hard to find another of its kind on this continent. Anyway, I was thinking of offering this to His Majesty, the King. However, since Brother Xue said that my Grand Pavilion does not compare to his Pure Wind House, I could only bring this out. I don't know what Brother Xue thinks. Is this Holy Brilliance Gem enough for you to bet on?”

Xue Ji's gaze was directed to Nian Bing. He could not help but hesitate. After all, the Pure Wind House was his heart's blood for half of his life. If he lost it, how could he remain established in Ice Snow City?

At this moment, Nian Bing was thinking about how many high-

grade magic arrays were based on light magic. Light magic was a bit more complicated to understand and was an indispensable part of strong intermediate level magic arrays. Since Nian Bing did not possess the ability to use light magic, acquiring the Holy Brilliance Gem would be extremely advantageous for his magic array research. He could even rely on the gem's aura to make dishes from light magic. Seeing Xue Ji's expression, he shot him a confident gaze before he strode up to the judges' table. Afterwards, he took the box with the Proud Sky Knife inside of it and placed it on top of the judges table.

“Owner Jin, though your Holy Brilliance Gem is undoubtedly precious, if you were to bet it for the Pure Wind House, then the relationship between the two establishments would definitely be harmed. Instead, I'll use the item in this box to bet against your Holy Brilliance Gem.”

Jin Hao snorted coldly. He had already taken notice of the outsider, Nian Bing, whose qualities had already surprised him. Seeing as he was a relative of the emperor however, he did not put Nian Bing in his eyes. He snorted coldly and retorted, “What qualifications do you have to bet with me? Don't tell me that this box contains an item comparable to Holy Brilliance?”

Nian Bing did not get angry because of Jin Hao's contempt. He merely spoke calmly, “Whether or not it is worthy enough to gamble, I would have to ask Owner Jin to see the item before speaking. As for me, I am a part of the Pure Wind House.”

Xue Ji secretly let out a sigh of relief. Although the Proud Sky Knife was precious, he had already given it to Nian Bing. What's

more, the Proud Sky Knife was very far from comparing with the Pure Wind House in his heart. “That’s right, Nian Bing does represent me. The item in this box is not any less valuable than Brother Jin’s.”

Nian Bing opened the brocade box, and the same situation as yesterday occurred. In an instant, green light burst into the air as the golden light receded to the side. The two lights, gold and green, did not reject each other. Each occupied their own spot as they shone continuously. Nian Bing thrust his hand into the box and pulled out the Proud Sky Knife. He presented the knife handle to the judges and spoke calmly, “This knife is called Proud Sky. It is Uncle Xue’s item. The knife handle is inlayed with the Humming Wind Stone, whose quality is not any lower than your Holy Brilliance. The knife body is cast out of Green Metal Ore. It should be enough to compare with the Holy Brilliance Gem.”

A greedy gaze sparkled in Jin Hao’s eyes. He was about to speak when an eager voice suddenly interjected. “Old Jin, I want this knife, it’s a really good knife!”

Following the voice, Liao Feng strode up in front of the judges table. His greedy gaze was fixed on Proud Sky in Nian Bing’s hands. “A good knife, a really good knife. Old Jin, I definitely want this knife. Bet it with him.”

Jin Hao had actually wanted to use the Holy Brilliance Gem to argue for an even better deal, but since Liao Feng had made such a decision, there was nothing more to say. He closed the lid of Holy Brilliance’s box and said, “Okay, it’s a bet. I ask the lord Marquis and the lord Earl to stand as witnesses.” While saying this, he

pushed the box containing Holy Brilliance in front of the Marquis.

Throughout his life as a marquis, Nuo Ya had seen an innumerable amount of treasures. However, right now, such treasures could not possibly compare to the two items in front of him. He resisted his desires with great difficulty and nodded his head. “Okay, as the Marquis, I stand witness to your bet. This is good; gambling items is a lot better than gambling your homes. It also helps to avoid damaging friendships. Now, let the competition begin. The usual rules stand; time limit is one hour.”

Liao Feng’s eyes were filled with self-confidence as he shot a sharp gaze at Ming Yuan. Ming Yuan’s face bore a slightly strange smile. “Liao Feng, it’s good that youngsters have talent, but being too arrogant can lead to quite a wretched downfall. It’s a waste for you to be looking at me, because today I am not the main actor. The person you are competing with is standing next to you.”

Liao Feng and Jin Hao were both shocked. The two people’s lines of sight fell onto Nian Bing. Liao Feng sized up Nian Bing, who outwardly looked like a nobleman’s son. Suspicious, he asked, “Him? He’s considered a chef with an appearance like that?”

Xue Ji smiled slightly and said, “Why can’t he be? Nian Bing is my newly hired head chef. He has the same position as Brother Ming. Today, he is representing the Pure Wind House in this competition. The challenge I issued didn’t say that Ming Yuan would be challenging Liao Feng; rather, it said that the Pure Wind House was challenging the Grand Pavilion. Nian Bing is a part of my Pure Wind House; naturally, he has the qualifications to enter the competition.

At the judges table, the Marquis and the Earl's eyes were filled with shocked expressions. Marquis Nuo Ya was a little more discreet; after all, he had never seen Nian Bing. Earl Luo Hao had already seen him wearing a fire mage's robe at his daughter's banquet. He was the one chosen for his daughter's first dance at the banquet. Combined with Nian Bing's appearance, it naturally gave him an extremely deep impression. He turned his head to look at Long Zhi and asked, "President, isn't this Nian Bing fellow a part of your association? How come he has run off to the Pure Wind House to be a chef?"

Long Zhi smiled bitterly and said, "I didn't want to make him go there, but Big Brother Xue Ji's maneuvering is too good! The Proud Sky Knife in Nian Bing's hand was the price for him to be a chef."

Jin Hao's eyes glinted. His original plan had been destroyed. He never would have thought that Xue Ji would make an outside chef face off against Liao Feng. From Xue Ji's confident gaze, he understood that this youngster would definitely not have just ordinary accomplishments in the field of cooking. "Lord Marquis, it seems a bit inappropriate that the Pure Wind House has swapped people."

At this time, Nuo Ya looked at Nian Bing with surprise. Hearing what was said, he smiled slightly and responded, "There isn't anything wrong with it. Brother Xue never said anything about who his participant would be. This is a challenge between Pure Wind House and the Grand Pavilion. I want to see this youngster's cooking specialty. Stop delaying; the competition has begun."

Right at this time, everyone's eyes flashed with light. At the entrance, Luo Rou had appeared, wearing an azure changqun. She dressed simply today. Her dress was plain, devoid of any ornaments. Her long blue hair was combed back, held neatly by a headband. When she entered the doorway, she immediately attracted everyone's attention. Even Liao Feng, standing next to Nian Bing, held bewitchment in his eyes.

Luo Rou walked up to the judges table and made the proper greetings. "Uncle Nuo Ya, Father, Uncle Xue, Uncle Jin, Rou'er came late. She asks for your forgiveness."

Seeing the city-wide famous intelligent female, no matter if it was Jin Hao or Xue Ji, the expression on their faces softened. Luo Rou relied on her intelligence to win their respect. In Ice Snow City, though she was just a young woman, the respect afforded to her wasn't any less than her father. Nuo Ya laughed and said, "I know you, such a lively girl. Quickly, come sit by your father and enjoy the show. Today's competition will be very exciting; the Pure Wind House has brought in a new chef."

Luo Rou looked at Nian Bing, her eyes exuding a slightly challenging light. With a small smile, she said, "Niece has already seen his cooking skills – they are truly unforgettable. I want to see who will win in a match up between him and the Golden Chef." Her words were very ordinary; she wasn't lauding Nian Bing at all. However, this simple sentence had raised Nian Bing onto the same level as Liao Feng.

Liao Feng smiled slightly and said, "Miss Wise Girl, you haven't come to our Grand Pavilion in a long time. If you have any free

time, please come and visit. Liao Feng will definitely cook for you personally, making things especially for the young Miss to eat.”

Luo Rou lightly smiled and said, “That’s great! However, if Luo Rou monopolizes the famous Golden Chef, she’s afraid that customers would be upset and come to bother her about it.” She deliberately made a scared expression, immediately teasing a hearty laugh out of the judges. Liao Feng immediately followed up. “No way, no way. My name isn’t all that great and pales considerably to Miss Wise Girl’s reputation. At most, it’s a bit better than the Pure Wind House.”

Nian Bing looked on with the impassivity of a bystander. He hadn’t seen Liao Feng’s cooking skills before, but based on the arrogance he was showing to Luo Rou, Nian Bing gathered that Liao Feng’s cooking comprehension was not inferior to Ming Yuan’s. Any accomplishments that he made today, perhaps only relied on innate talent. Nian Bing looked him over lazily, and then headed for the cooking counter on his side.

Xue Jing suddenly bounded up from the side. When she got in front of Nian Bing, she said, “Lower your head. Why’d you gotta grow that tall?”

Nian Bing looked at her blankly, but complied with her demands. “It seems that you’re not short either. I am just a little taller than you are.”

Xue Jing smiled slightly. From behind her, she brought out a snow white chef’s hat. She personally set it atop Nian Bing’s golden hair. When it was settled firmly, she said, “En, with this,

you look just like a chef.”

Seeing Xue Jing and Nian Bing’s intimate appearance, Long Ling could not help but lower her head sadly. A strange light flashed in the corner of Luo Rou’s eyes.

After Marquis Nuo Ya’s voice decreed the beginning of the competition, Liao Feng finally returned to his cooking counter. In a low voice, he instructed his three underlings as they started to move. Nian Bing stood behind his own counter, but was not anxiously taking action at all. As Nian Bing observed his opponent, he was surprised to discover that he had underestimated Liao Feng. Standing behind the counter, Liao Feng expertly brandished his shiny kitchen knife. His attention was extremely focused. All kinds of ingredients took shape continuously under his hands. He could immediately repress his emotions and focus on just the cooking counter. He was not an easy opponent at all.

Ming Yuan spoke in a low voice next to Nian Bing’s ears. “What are we doing? I saw what you asked Jing Jing to bring. They were all ordinary ingredients. How do you plan to cook them?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “Today, I will use beauty to fight beauty. I want to crush the Golden Chef Liao Feng in every aspect, so we cannot move hastily.”

The one who was the most confident in Nian Bing was not Xue Ji, but Ming Yuan. As a fellow chef, it was very clear to him that he and Nian Bing were in totally different realms. Even if Nian Bing were to once again make the Nine Mysterious Green Dragons Concealed in Clouds of Ice, it would be enough for victory. On top

of that, Nian Bing now had the Proud Sky Knife. There wasn't any suspense in this competition.

Nian Bing lowered his head to look at the Proud Sky Knife in his hands. A green light circulated around the knife. Feeling the wind wrapped around his hand, and the activity of the wind elements, Nian Bing suddenly realized that the Ice and Fire magic source inside of him seemed to be calling out to Proud Sky. He should have no way of utilizing the wind element, but at the call of the Ice and Fire magic source, he was enveloped in an intimate feeling. It was a wonderful, cozy feeling. Nian Bing's mood had completely become one with the knife. He became lost in this state, seeming to forget time.

At the judges table, the Marquis Nuo Ya turned to ask Xue Ji, "Brother Xue, your newly hired chef is only looking at his knife. Is he not going to move at all? You see, Liao Feng is already in full swing. An hour is not that long. If he can't finish the competition because he moved too slowly, I can only declare it as the Pure Wind House's loss."

Xue Ji's eyebrows creased. He was also worrying about this same problem. If Nian Bing could not even complete the competition, then no one could help the Pure Wind House. He really wanted to go and wake up Nian Bing, but the Wise Girl Luo Rou next to Luo Hao said, "You don't need to bother him. He is constantly surprising people with strange things. Since he is not moving, it is naturally because he is certain in himself. Just watch him."

On Liao Feng's side, he had already started cooking the first dish. The flame rocketed in the air. Liao Feng's expression remained at

ease and unrestrained. Every kitchen tool was flying in his hands. A delicious fragrance assailed the nostrils. His three helper chefs continuously supplied him with ingredients.

It was half an hour into the competition, and Liao Feng had already started cooking his final dish. Meanwhile, Nian Bing was still looking at the knife in his hand without moving. Ming Yuan, who stood next to him, was extremely excited to see the absolute mastery of the Demon Chef's successor. They were not worried, but Xue Ji was another case. The competition was already half over and Nian Bing still hadn't made a move. This competition was related to the reputation of the Pure Wind House and the ownership of the Proud Sky Knife! Jin Hao, next to him, smiled coldly inside. He earnestly wished for Nian Bing to remain in this state up until the end. By beating the Pure Wind House this time, he would not only acquire a precious knife, but he would also make the Pure Wind House unable to raise its head high in the face of the Grand Pavilion.

Chapter 29.1 – Ice And Fire Nine Layered Heavens

With each person harboring a different feeling in their hearts, Nian Bing's gaze finally left the knife. He slowly raised his head, watching the industrious Liao Feng before him. Calmly, he said, "Master Ming, in a moment, you must toss me each ingredient as I ask for it. It would be much appreciated if you threw it in front of my chest. Great Ice and Snow Goddess! Please grant me your wrath, deliver us to the lost, holy shore, ——Snowstorm."

Under the effect of Nian Bing's enchantment, the temperature in the hall dropped as snowflakes appeared in midair. The bizarre thing was that the snowflakes did not interfere with Liao Feng on the opposite side; they only appeared by Nian Bing. The light blue snowflakes supported Nian Bing's body as he floated into the air. He flew out from behind the cooking counter and in front of the gazes of the shocked crowd, slowly came to a stop in the center of the hall. Liao Feng could not help but slow down his hands a little when he saw Nian Bing's unusual form. He nearly made a mistake, but he immediately reigned in his emotions and continued to make his own dishes. The snowstorm coalesced beneath Nian Bing's feet under his superior magic control, forming a spiral of snow and wind. Nian Bing was surprised to discover that the Proud Sky Knife he held in his hand was continuously emitting wind aura that made the rotation of the snowstorm even faster. The ceiling of the Pure Wind House hall was very high; it approached ten meters. Nian Bing hovered at about two meters from the ground. Lightly, he called out, "Green onion."

Ming Yuan tossed a clean green onion towards Nian Bing's chest. The scallion disappeared as a green light transformed into

countless afterimages. “Ginger.”

Just as before, a ginger flew into that green light and also disappeared. Marquis Nuo Ya and Xue Ji’s had the highest martial arts level among the guests, but even they could only vaguely see the green onion and ginger turn into dust, surrounded by the green knife light. It was unlikely that the ingredients had fallen from the place where Ming Yuan had thrown them. This kind of midair cooking was a first for everyone; a gorgeous scene that immediately surpassed Liao Feng’s display.

“Whole chicken.” A clean whole chicken flew at Nian Bing, who used his left hand to grab it by the foot and toss it into the air. While it was up in the air, he produced a fireball in his left hand that formed into a disk shape under his magic control. In Nian Bing’s hand, the Proud Sky Knife arced. A wave of ice flashed forward to wrap around the oil dispenser. With a flick of the wrist, the utensil immediately poured out a portion of clear oil. The flame in Nian Bing’s left hand rose higher into the air as it accurately caught the oil. The knife light in his right hand instantly disappeared as the diced green onions and ginger were simultaneously thrown into the fire. The whole chicken descended from the sky and fell directly into the the flames that had soared up into the air because of the oil. In just a moment, the scallion and ginger were stir-fried in oil and gave out a fragrance that filled the entire hall.

Long Zhi had already gotten to his feet. He couldn’t believe his eyes when he saw the blaze in Nian Bing’s left hand. That was obviously fire magic! Although it was only a low level flame skill, it was coming from the hands of an ice mage. Long Zhi couldn’t even imagine what this meant. He was doubting what was in front of

him, but Nian Bing's actions did not stop.

A green light flashed, and the fifty centimeters long Proud Sky Knife directly stabbed into the chicken. Under Nian Bing's skilled movements, the chicken was continuously turned. The fragrances of the green onions and ginger combined with the chicken's fragrance as it was roasted together. The flame in Nian Bing's hand started to undergo a metamorphosis. It pulsed in waves of strong and weak flames, moving from left to right as it separated into nine layers of different-sized flames that continually roasted the chicken body. Nian Bing's body, under the influence of the snow storm, slowly moved towards the kitchen counter. Suddenly, the snow storm drifted away and left Nian Bing in front of the counter. He speedily picked up two lotus leaves and wrapped the chicken with them. The chicken was then quickly rotated over the flame three times before the blaze disappeared. A blue light flashed, and surrounding the lotus leaves was a thick layer of around three centimeter of ice. From fire came ice. Everything had happened very naturally, but everyone knew that ice and fire were two different extremes. For one mage to possess both type of magics, what could that imply? It had already surpassed their imagination.

Luo Rou finally understood. She understood why there had been two types of magic when Third Manager Liao had been killed. She also understood that the Magic Reaper was only one person.

The chicken wrapped in ice was set on a table. The snowstorm again swept away Nian Bing's body as he floated above the ground. This time, his words came much more quickly. "Green onion, ginger, garlic." While saying what he needed, Nian Bing directed the snow storm to position himself above the counter. With the snow and wind blowing beneath him, Nian Bing immediately

swept all of the seasonings into the air. Under the influence of his tremendous magic control, the seasoning dispensers floated in front of Nian Bing. A blue light condensed in Nian Bing's palm, quickly turning into a gigantic ice spoon. Green onion, ginger, and garlic simultaneously fell into the growing ice spoon. In fact, it could no longer be described as a spoon, but rather a pot forged out of ice. Nian Bing bit the Proud Sky knife between his teeth, waved his right hand, and created another ice spoon. This time, it was much smaller. The ice spoon was quickly sent into the ice pot to stir and mix all kind of seasoning. His right hand closed and the ice ladle disappeared, and was replaced by a fireball. The ball of flame flew into the pot. With a bang, the contents of the pot were immediately set on fire. This wasn't an ordinary fireball technique, it was a bursting flame! This time, Nian Bing didn't instantaneously cast the magic. He didn't have the ability to quickly cast the bursting flame. Instead, he used a small scroll and relied on his superior magic control to ingeniously fry the ingredients. The knife again fell to his right hand as he yelled out, "Tomatoes, two of them."

Ming Yuan flicked his hand, and two tomatoes were thrown at Nian Bing. He didn't even look at what he was doing, for fear of wasting a moment.

Green light flashed, and immediately wrapped around the red tomatoes. Two red things were sent flying out from the green light. The judges were surprised to see that it was actually the tomato skin. The skin was whole, and had only one nick. Using a knife to peel tomato skin, this level of knife skill had already made the judges' jaws drop in shock. The red juice was scattered into the flames of the ice pot. Under the effects of the Proud Sky Knife, the tomatoes had already turned into tomato juice that soaked into the seasonings. The tomato juice immediately melted into the flame

before Nian Bing's hand shook a little bit, and it was immediately thrown up into the air. This time under the effects of the extremely high temperatures of the bursting flame, the seasoning completely dissolved into the tomato juice. The ice pot was raised in the air, and once again the tomato juice was drawn into the pot. "Lamb ribs."

Half a rack of lamb ribs were sent flying into the air. Proud Sky glinted, and the ribs were evenly separated into smaller pieces before falling into the pot. The contact between the lamb ribs and the boiling juices gave birth to a piercing sound. Nian Bing flicked his wrist and got rid of the ice pot, smoothly setting it on the counter. Nian Bing pointed a finger at the pot, and the flame technique once again appeared, making the once extinguished bursting flame once again ignite. Nian Bing said calmly, "Master Ming, I must trouble you to sprinkle a teaspoon of oil into the pot every three breaths." The ice pot was continuously melting and became see through. You could see entirely the sheep ribs and tomato juice being boiled continuously on the inside.

Nian Bing floated downwards, and the snowstorm returned the seasoning dispensers back to the counter. He brought his hands together, and the whirling snowstorm began to condense until it became an ice cube half a meter in diameter. The ice cube was about 20 centimeters thick. Nian Bing concentrated on the ice cube before him. Immediately, the Proud Sky Knife became a sparkling green light which circled around the ice cube once. It pared off all of the uneven protrusions. Proud Sky, like a spring breeze, trembled in Nian Bing's hand, emitting a low groaning sound. The Free Wind's Gentle Hymn danced around the ice cube.

The green light then subsided as Nian Bing returned to behind

the counter. The circular chunk of ice had been neatly divided into eight pieces that were still connected. Every portion appeared to be triangular in a shape. Every piece was exactly the same size. Nian Bing's left hand pressed on the ice chunk, dividing into eight ice plates. Immediately, an icy coldness wrapped around the ice plates, to prevent them from melting. Nian Bing called out, "Potatoes, carrots, cucumber, sweet potato, pork, mutton, beef, dog meat. One portion of each." These ingredients had already been prepared. Just as Nian Bing opened his mouth, Ming Yuan immediately put them in front of him.

While Ming Yuan was putting the ingredients Nian Bing had requested on the counter, the latter grabbed a pot from next to him and poured in fresh water. His left hand grabbed a scroll from his chest pocket. Activating it with magic, the bursting flame immediately appeared in the center of his hand. The water in the pot was sent into a near-boil very quickly. Nian Bing used his teeth to bite down on the pot handle, while his left hand controlled the flame. His right hand held the Proud Sky Knife as he chose two cleaned snow white fish. This was the Ice Moon Empire's regional speciality, the extreme ice snow fish. They only lived in the sea of ice to the north of the Ice Moon Empire. There were no scales on its body, meat was extremely delicious, and its nutritional value was exceptional. The snow fish was the most precious out of the ingredients that Nian Bing needed today.

Green knife lights rained down on the fish. First, the Proud Sky Knife had to remove the two fish's head and tail. In four successive cuts, the fish's head and tail had immediately fallen to the side. The fish body was picked up and a tinkling sound could be heard. Nian Bing did not use the knife to hack at the fish. He instead used the flat of the blade to slap at the fish body. With soft sounds, at the two cut ends of the fish, a white pointed tip emerged. The

Proud Sky Knife was raised gently, and two white strands were immediately pulled out of the fish's body. The knife light suddenly turned back and the two snow fish broke down into a paste. In that moment, no one could see clearly how many cuts had Nian Bing made.

The snow fish paste was added into the boiling water. The umami taste of the fish soup emerged quickly. Nian Bing set the knife next to him and used his right hand to take the ice pot from his mouth. Looking at the milky white fish soup, a slight smile couldn't help but cross his face. The bursting flame disappeared, and the fish soup was left boiling inside the cast iron pot from the remaining heat. Nian Bing put the pot to the side and went to the counter. The green light flashed, and with the assistance of the wind from the Proud Sky Knife, his hand speed reached never before obtained heights. Under the effects of the Proud Sky Knife, the eight items that Nian Bing had previously prepared were immediately shredded into thread-like filaments. As far as Nian Bing considered, this was incredibly easy for him.

Each of the eight kinds of ingredients were placed into the ice plates. Nian Bing used a spoon to put a small amount of different kinds of seasonings on the eight portions. The fish soup in the iron pot was still boiling as he finished up. With a smile, Nian Bing spoke to Ming Yuan next to him. "Master Ming, please pour the fish soup into the ice plates." While saying this, he simultaneously used both his hands to press down on the counter. Two circular disks gradually formed out of condensed ice. At this time, the ice pot that had been holding the sheep ribs had melted into a perilously thin layer. The pot would soon break, and the fire inside the ice was also extremely close into extinguishing.

Nian Bing looked at the ice plates he had made. With a flick of his wrist, an ice plate slid across the counter. He had perfectly timed the placement of the ice plate. As soon as the plate reached its destination, the ice pot shattered. The lamb ribs wrapped in tomato juice were piled on the center of the ice plate. At this time, the seasoned tomato juice had already turned into a sticky sauce because of the amount of time they had spent in the fire. They completely wrapped around the sheep ribs, not allowing the slightest bit of excess tomato juice to escape. A discerning person would know that this dish was already complete.

Nian Bing's gaze turned back to his first dish, the chicken wrapped in his ice. He tossed the chicken into the air, his right hand throwing out a bursting flame scroll. With a bang, the ice cube exploded in the flame. The lotus leaves burned into nothing, and the golden colored chicken fell down while wrapped in fire. Nian Bing picked up the other ice plate he made to catch the chicken. Next, all kinds of ingredients were quickly shuffled in his hands, while he arranged the two ice plates. For Nian Bing, this was not difficult. Just as all the ingredients had been arranged beautifully, his two hands pressed down on the void above the ice plates and immediately, two ice covers appeared on top of the plate. They had completely fused with the ice plates, hiding the food completely.

Proud Sky dimmed as Nian Bing put it back in the lead box. He fished out a cloth bag from his chest pocket and took out something that pulsed in light blue color. The Demonic Engraving knife appeared once again..

At this time, the fish soup had already been poured into the eight deep ice plates. Nian Bing chanted softly, "The ghostly hand

descends to overturn the heavens, the engraving becomes the billowing waves that revolves a hundred times, the work of god for all eternity will remain as the knife reflects the waning moon in the cold spring.” The blue light of the Demonic Engraving seemed to dance as it flew away. Bits of ice were scattered nonstop, and eight different designs were engraved in quick succession on the outer part of the eight ice plates. Each of the eight designs engraved in each plate corresponded to a specific ingredient. The carvings were fine and delicate, vivid and lifelike.

“Time is up. If the two chefs would please serve their dishes to the judges.” In shock, Marquis Nuo Ya announced the end of the competition.

Liao Feng stood lifelessly behind his own counter. His three dishes had already been finished while Nian Bing was in the air. Everything that Nian Bing had done had already exceeded the scope of his knowledge.

Jin Hao’s face had turned a deathly grey. Although he had not tried the dishes, he feared that he had already lost.

Chapter 29.2 – Ice And Fire Nine Layered Heavens

Six dishes had been served to the judges; of those, Nian Bing's three dishes were covered by a layer of faint white mist. Marquis Nuo Ya looked at Nian Bing, then at Liao Feng, whose head was lowered in contemplation. With a smile, he said, "If the two chefs would please introduce their dishes, we can begin tasting. Liao Feng, you first." Bowls and chopsticks had already been passed out, Xue Ji and Jin Hao included. Every person was holding their chopsticks, preparing to move. Their gazes were completely focused on Nian Bing's three dishes plated on ice.

Liao Feng shook his head; his eyes filled with a complicated emotion as he looked at Nian Bing next to him. "I think that there is no point in me introducing anything. I only want to try Chef Nian Bing's dishes."

The Marquis Nuo Ya's gaze turned to Nian Bing. With a smile, he said, "Then I will ask Chef Nian Bing to introduce his dishes."

Nian Bing looked at the three plates covered by ice. Calmly, he said, "These three dishes are a part of that unifies ice and fire. I call this set, Ice and Fire Nine Layer Heavens." While speaking, Nian Bing gestured to the first dish. He said, "The main ingredient of this dish is an ordinary chicken. I call it Ice and Fire Exploding Lotus Chicken. Originally, it was just plain chicken, but I first fried the diced green onions and ginger to bring out the flavor then saturated the chicken in it. After frying the chicken until it was about eighty percent cooked, I extinguished the flame, and wrapped it in lotus leaves before freezing over the outside. Because

the chicken was hot, under the effect of the two extreme temperatures, the flavor of the lotus leaves was released more effectively, completely mixing with the chicken. Finally, I bombarded the chicken with the exploding flame spell, making the ice and lotus leaves disappear. This allowed the flavor of the lotus leaf to completely fuse into the chicken, and also allowed the chicken to finish cooking as well. Thus, the chicken, under the two extreme temperatures of ice and fire, became more tender. The skin is golden crispy. As each judge will see for themselves, this dish does not have seasoning. This is not a mistake. I did this deliberately. Cooking that pays attention to bringing out the original flavor of the ingredients is the true cooking skill. Therefore, the most important point of this Ice and Fire Exploding Lotus Chicken is its unique fragrance. I used ice to cover the outside in order to preserve the Ice and Fire Exploding Lotus Chicken's temperature and fragrance. Please try it while it's hot."

Everyone moved at the same time. No one paid attention to Liao Feng's three dishes; instead, they made a beeline for Nian Bing's Ice and Fire Exploding Lotus Chicken. A thick fragrance billowed into everyone's face once the outside ice layer was cracked by chopsticks, revealing the golden chicken. Everyone moved towards the chicken one after the other. The chicken skin was extremely crispy. Right after the first bite of the chicken, all the judges, including Jin Hao, all made the exact same move: extending their chopsticks for a second bite. Off to the side, Liao Feng was chewing the tender chicken. His facial expression continued to change, not to sadness, but to pleasant surprise.

"Brother Nian, I really admire you. Your Ice and Fire Exploding Lotus Chicken not only completely expresses the flavor of the chicken, but also stacks eight kinds of different flavors. Some are strong, some are weak. I think there are eight – no, nine kinds

flavor! No wonder it's called Ice and Fire Nine Layer Heavens series. Even if I improved my dishes, it couldn't top your chicken!"

Seeing such sincerity from a proud person like Liao Feng, Nian Bing could not help but improve his impression of the young man before him. Before he could say so much, he heard Marquis Nuo Ya shout, "Old Xue, don't eat so much! Leave me a little. My chicken leg, and my..."

Nian Bing lowered his head to look and was shocked cold. At this time, there was not a bit of chicken left, not even the slightest residue was left. All the judges also seemed to have neglected the rice as well. Uncaring of the greasy food, they had directly used their hands to eat. Even Luo Rou, who had a refined personality, was holding a chicken wing in her hands to eat. In front of such gourmet food, no one cared about being elegant.

Nian Bing smiled bitterly, "Please slow down a bit everyone. Aren't there still two more dishes?" Pointing to the lamb ribs dish, he said, "The lamb ribs are the principal ingredients of the dish. It is called Ice and Fire Blood Rain Ribs. I added a small amount of more than ten different seasonings to the dish. After all the seasonings were mixed in with the tomato juice, not only do they not get rid of the stench, it serves to set off the smell. It is then stewed using ice and fire, two extreme magics, which allowed the flavor of the seasonings and the tomato juice completely saturate the lamb ribs. This brings out the stench of the lamb. The outer layer of tomato juice is already cool, but the lamb ribs on the inside are definitely hot. The outside being cold and the inside hot, gives birth to another flavor.

He hadn't finished speaking when the judges, whose mouths were still chewing on the chicken, already started reaching out their chopsticks for the Ice and Fire Blood Rain Ribs. The ice covering was shattered desperately. The judges quickly determined that Nian Bing's comments were extremely accurate after eating the dish. This time, Luo Rou had become smarter. With a piece of lamb rib in her mouth, she immediately poked her third chopsticks into the third dish, the soup made with fish.

“Waa, how fresh! Why haven't I tasted this kind of umami from snow fish before?” Luo Rou's hands grabbed a spoon. When she had drunk a mouthful of soup, she had become enchanted by the dish in the eight part ice plate.

Nian Bing smiled and said, “This Ice and Fire Eight Extreme Delicacy is the most skillful of the dishes in the Ice and Fire Nine Layer Heaven series. Everyone should have seen, from when I was making the dish, that I used snow fish to make soup. I even chopped the fish bones into a fine paste. Ordinary people that cook snow fish make two mistakes. One, they are unable to remove all of the earthy, fishy smell of the Snow Fish. The other problem is that they toss the snow fish bones. The first problem can be solved very easily by pulling out the tendons of the fish. Everybody saw the white strings that I pulled out—those were the fish tendons. Those tendons are also known as odor tendons. You only have to take them out and the fishy smell will naturally disappear. As for the fish bones, each of them have fish oils inside. Since that's the tastiest part of the fish, putting the entire snow fish into the pot is naturally the best decision. The Ice and Fire Eight Extremes Delicacy has nine main ingredients. That is, snow fish and the other eight kinds of ordinary ingredients. When the snow fish soup was boiling, I put it into each part of the eight part ice plate, which in turn cooked the other eight finely shredded ingredients

into the snow fish soup. Thus, the specialty of this Ice and Fire Eight Extremes Delicacy is the eight distinct flavors. The dish is actually a soup – all you need to do is drink the liquid. Right now, the soup's temperature should be comfortable. Please try it, everyone.”

No matter if it was the employees of the Pure Wind House, the plainly clothed bodyguards of the marquis, or the personal guards of the earl, they all knew what it meant to sweep past like a destructive wind, to devour like a wolf and swallow like a tiger. Golden Chef Liao Feng's three dishes looked extremely beautiful on the outside, but compared to Nian Bing's extremely eye catching Ice and Fire Nine Layer Heaven set which was surrounded by white mist, their beauty simply could not compare. Once Nian Bing finished his explanation, the three dishes had disappeared entirely. Every single of the judges had an expression of wanting to continue, nearly chewing on those plates made of ice.

Jin Hao embarrassedly put down his eating utensils. He focused his gaze on Nian Bing and said suddenly, “I have been immersed in the profession of foodstuffs for half my life, but I have never tasted such delicious dishes. Chef Nian Bing, if you desire to come to our Grand Pavilion, I will accept any condition of yours.”

Nian Bing said indifferently, “So what you're saying is that Owner Jin admits defeat? No need for every judge to make a decision?”

Jin Hao's eyes shown. “There's no point. I know very well what kind of dishes Liao Feng can make, and I know I have lost. What's more, I lost very thoroughly. I really cannot comprehend where on

earth Brother Xue found you. I, Jin Hao, am not a sore loser. A loss is a loss. I hope you can think over my offer. The Lords Marquis and Earl, Jin Hao has business, I must take my leave.” After speaking, he walked away from the judges table, and departed from the gates of the Pure Wind House.

Although the chefs who had been assisting Liao Feng left with Jin Hao, Liao Feng turned to Nian Bing to ask, “Brother Nian, could you tell me how you could control the chicken’s flavor to have so much depth?”

Nian Bing smiled indifferently and said, “The most important thing is heat control. Even though the chicken does have to be cooked, the temperature at which the chicken is cooked, as well as the amount of ginger and scallion mixed in, can be controlled. This can vary the temperature greatly; such are the wonders of magic. I also noticed from the dishes you made that you pay the most attention to the appearance. Though I imagine the flavor is pretty good, it would still be worse than what the expectation would be. If you focus on transforming the flavor from now on, you should progress in your cooking.”

Liao Feng’s eyes held a note of respect. “I have received your teachings. If we meet again, I will ask you for advice.” Finished speaking, he paid his respects to the earl and the marquis then turned to leave.

The marquis recovered his expression and stood. He looked at Nian Bing with eyes of praise. “There is no need for me to say anything else. Nian Bing, your decisive superiority has earned you victory in this competition. However, I am very curious on how

you could simultaneously use two opposing magics? Although I am not familiar with magic, I know that this violates common sense.”

Nian Bing thrust his hand into his chest, and fished out no less than thirty scrolls of all shapes and sizes. He said with a smile, “Lord Marquis, please take a look. In reality, I am just a ice magic mage who relied on these to produce all of the flames. I exchanged the ice magic scrolls I had made at a magic store for fire magic scrolls. When combined with my culinary skills, producing these results is only natural.”

The Marquis took a look at the amount of magic scrolls and couldn’t help but feel uncomfortable. After all, even the worst scroll was still expensive. The small amount of high rank scrolls would have been particularly expensive. There was no need to see for himself, he knew that the amount of magic scrolls used could be said to have cost a fortune. He turned his head to Long Zhi. “President Long, you are always asking for money, but I see now that your Mage Association has bountiful resources!”

Long Zhi looked at Nian Bing and said, “Lord Marquis, please do not be mistaken. These scrolls are owned by Nian Bing himself. He is a genius in the field of making magic scrolls. His success rate is high enough that he has many to keep for himself. They weren’t supplied by the association.”

The marquis laughed and said, “No matter. Nian Bing’s consummate culinary skills have made me gasp in amazement. Perhaps, even the imperial chef of His Majesty the King’s imperial palace could not compare to him. Such a great Ice and Fire Nine Layer Heaven, a great Ice and Fire Nine Layer Heaven! Putting

magic in cooking is really a novel field. Maybe I will bring up this idea to the culinary schools.”

Next to him, Luo Rou got to her feet and said with a smile, “Uncle Nuo Ya, bringing up the idea is useless. How many mages would have a desire to learn cooking? Uncle, since Nian Bing has won, shouldn’t you give him the prize from the bet?”

Marquis Nuo Ya flushed red. The box that contained the Holy Brilliance Stone had been next to his hand the whole time. He had a really hard time parting with the dazzlingly expensive light element gem; but because of his position, it would not be good for him to display such greed. Nodding his head, he spoke, “Right, I, the marquis, almost forgot. Nian Bing, here you go. This is your prize.”

Nian Bing received the box made out of lead and passed it to Xue Ji next to him. “Uncle, it’s your win.”

Xue Ji did not take it. He smiled while saying, “No, it’s your win. You used the Proud Sky Knife to make the bet and won. Although the Proud Sky knife doesn’t completely belong to you, I’ve already sold it. Do you need to give me the things you won from your own bet?”

Nian Bing’s face was blank for a moment, but looking into the deep gaze of Xue Ji, he gripped the square box tightly in his hand. He spoke while smiling. “Then for me to refuse would be impolite.” He did not want give Xue Ji an opportunity to impose any conditions. Without trying to be secretive, he put the Holy Brilliance Stone into his chest pocket. Although such an action was

poor manners, Nian Bing didn't really care because the Holy Brilliance Gem was such a treasure.

Long Zhi came out from behind the judges table and paid his respects to the marquis and earl. "Everyone, the competition has concluded. Big Brother Xue, if there's nothing else, please let Nian Bing come back with us."

Xue Ji and Long Zhi's relationship was very good. Moreover, today Nian Bing had triumphed greatly over the Grand Pavilion, so Xue Ji's mood was very good. "Okay. You guys can go back. Nian Bing, I will send a carriage to pick you up at nightfall."

Marquis Nuo Ya was still somewhat unsatisfied. "I haven't eaten my fill from those three dishes. Nian Bing, I want you to make two more dishes for us to sample."

Nian Bing could really not endure this. As a top-class chef, he didn't strive to learn the culinary arts to pander to the whims of noblemen and high ranking officials. However, he also couldn't reject the owner of Ice and Snow City. In this difficult situation, Luo Rou came to help him. "Uncle Nuo Ya, if we eat everything at once, there won't be any way for use to savor the taste. . Nian Bing also used a great amount of magic, just let him rest. Tomorrow, we will come again. Isn't that the same thing?"

Marquis Nuo Ya heard Luo Rou's words, and extraordinarily, he did not persist in his request. He nodded his head. "Since Rou'er has spoken, then we will be done here for today. Old Xue! Bring out the most valuable liquor in your collection. We will drink a few cups. That should be okay, no? Nian Bing, you go back first.

Tomorrow, I, the Marquis, will definitely come again to sample your handiwork. The Ice and Fire Nine Layer Heaven series. As expected, it was very creative.

Chapter 30.1 – A Skillful Fight Against A Magister

At the Grand Pavilion, Jin Hao's facial expression was grave as he sat down on a wooden chair decorated with flowery carvings. The Eldest Manager, Second Manager, as well as Liao Feng were standing in front of him.

Jin Hao slapped the table fiercely as he shouted angrily, "What do you have to say for yourselves! Why have each of you turned into a mute?"

The Eldest Manager, short and fat in stature, spoke with a face full of suffering, "Owner, what could we have done? You saw it too; that young'un called Nian Bing has almost godlike culinary skills. If we want to crush the Pure Wind House in this respect, I'm afraid it will be difficult."

Jin Hao snorted coldly. "Don't tell me you want to leave me helpless and waiting for death? Today's competition was made known to the entire city; even the whole street was blocked off. If there is no way to deal with the outcome, our Grand Pavilion's livelihood will drop by a thousand zhang in one moment. Could it be that you want me to admit defeat to that old fool Xue Ji? Just thinking of him being pleased with himself makes me want to kill him."

Second manager suddenly grinned darkly. He stepped forward once and said, "Owner, there is a way to resolve this issue."

Jin Hao's eyes glimmered as he said, "What is it? Quickly, speak."

Second Manger rolled his eyes and said, "At the present, there are two different ways. When that young'un Nian Bing was making food, I was carefully observing him. His stature gave me a very familiar feeling. It was almost identical to that of the man who had killed third brother. Moreover, third brother was wounded with fire and ice magic at the same time. Today, Nian Bing displayed two kinds of magic. Although his level of magic was not on par with the Magic Reaper, if we take into consideration his magic control, it's possible to say that he is at the level of the Magic Reaper."

Jin Hao said, "You suspect that he is that Magic Reaper? Are you certain?"

Second Manager shook his head and said, "To be honest, your subordinate is not certain at all. When I was exchanging blows with that Magic Reaper, the main element he used was fire. But today, when Nian Bing was making his food, the principle element he used was ice. Since he only used scrolls to cast his fire magic, I can't be certain that he's the Magic Reaper from before. Still, we can start up an investigation. If he really is the Magic Reaper, then he is most likely the person that the Ice and Snow Goddess' Worshiper Elder is looking for. Then, we need only secretly report it to the Goddess' Worshiper Elder. Not only would Nian Bing be out of luck, but the Pure Wind House would also be implicated. Even Xue Ji would not escape. Even if the Devourer of Blood and Exterminator of Soul, Xue Po, was to act, he wouldn't dare contend with the Goddess' Worshiper Elder. Of course, there is a risk to doing things this way. First, we are not certain to find any

evidence despite investigating. Even if Nian Bing is the Magic Reaper, if he is not the person that the Goddess' Worshipper Elder is looking for, the Elder might take her anger out on us."

Jin Hao nodded his head and asked, "What's the other option?"

Second Manager huffed a laugh. He said, "The other way is much more certain to be fruitful. Owner, since you and the imperial family have a close relationship, you only need to write a letter to His Majesty the king telling of Nian Bing's culinary arts. How could His Majesty not summon him into the palace? Without Nian Bing and with only Ming Yuan, how could the Pure Wind House be our Grand Pavilion's opponent?"

Jin Hao's eyes glinted. "Good. Old Second, you are no doubt the one with brains. We will carry out both plans at the same time, just as we have planned. Tomorrow I will write the letter to His Majesty. At the same time, you will dispatch people to closely observe Nian Bing. You must find strong evidence. Got it?"

Eldest manager and Second Manger bowed simultaneously and made noises of agreement. Next to them, Liao Feng's eyes held a hint of disdain.

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Xue Jing personally saw Nian Bing and the others out of the Pure Wind House. Nian Bing, Long Zhi, and Long Ling were silent as the carriage rolled along the road. Long Zhi's eyes were closed the whole time, seemingly thinking over some things.

The carriage finally arrived at the Mage Association. Long Zhi descended the carriage and said to his daughter, “Ling’er, you go in and rest first. I have some things to say to Nian Bing.”

Long Ling nodded and gave Nian Bing a glance before leaving.

“Nian Bing, come with me.” Long Zhi’s face was expressionless as he spat out the sentence. He turned to the Mage Association entrance. The two elementary mages responsible for guarding the entrance immediately bowed respectfully in greeting when they saw him going in.

Nian Bing followed Long Zhi as they headed straight for the large building with a pointed roof where Li De had conducted Nian Bing’s magic test.

Long Zhi walked straight to the center of the large hall before halting his footsteps. With his back facing to Nian Bing, he said flatly, “I really did not think that the legendary Ice and Fire Magic Source would truly exist. Maybe you managed to fool the others, but you cannot fool a magister. While it’s true that the Exploding Flame was made using a magic scroll, the flame spell was your own ability. I could clearly sense the fire element come from your body at that time. Right now, I want to speak with you over these things. Great Mage Nian Bing.”

Nian Bing seemed to have already anticipated Long Zhi’s interrogating questions. With a small smile, he said, “Since I made the Ice and Fire Nine Heavens Series, I did not plan on hiding

anything. President, I thank you for holding your questioning until now. It looks like I have not made the wrong gamble.”

Long Zhi turned around, his facial expression grave as he looked at Nian Bing. “Gamble? What were you gambling on?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “I was gambling on the relationship between you and the Ice Goddess’ Pagoda. Due to the oppression by the Ice Goddess’ Pagoda, the Association has never had a day where it could raise its head high. As a magister, it’s impossible for you to be content with not having the proper position within the Ice and Moon Empire. Actually, I knew that you had the ability to guess about my ability, but not be totally certain about my status as a dual element mage. However, I can tell you that I simultaneously possess the abilities to use fire and ice magic. I can also tell you that I am the person that the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Worshipper is looking for. Her objective in finding me is simple – they want to get back the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Stone.”

Long Zhi’s frame shook. He involuntarily cried out before asking, “You really are the one she’s looking for?”

Nian Bing pulled out a bundle of cloth from his chest and unwrapped it layer by layer until a shiny black scabbard could be seen. He tightly gripped second layer of cloth that was wrapped around the handle. On top of that layer of cloth was a magic array symbol. “The Ice and Snow Goddess’ stone is a top-level ice attribute magic stone. It is inlaid in the handle of this knife. The knife is called Morning Dew. It is not of lesser quality than Proud Sky. I cannot show you the Ice and Snow Goddess’ stone because

the Ice God's Pagoda is not that far away. I'm scared that the Ice and Snow Goddess' Worshiper would be able to feel its aura. We must open the windows to heaven and speak clearly. I followed my master for eight years to learn cooking. But eight years ago, I was originally came from a happy family. Because of certain reasons, my family was torn asunder by the Ice and Snow Goddess' Worshiper. She is my life-long enemy. The only reason why I toil to cultivate magic is because I hope that there is a day where I could exterminate the Ice Goddess' Pagoda. Since we both wish for the disappearance of the Ice and Snow Goddess from this continent, it is best for us to remain allies. If you permit it, I will always remain with the Association. In case my magic strength grows to the point where I can contend against the Ice and Snow Goddess' Pagoda, I will not hesitate in the slightest. I cannot tell you my true family background, but you might find out in the future. Right now, I only want you to understand that the Ice and Snow Goddess Worshiper and the Ice God's Pagoda are our mutual enemies."

"Nonsense." Long Zhi breathed in sharply. "The Ice and Moon Empire Mage Association and the Ice God's Pagoda are two branches that both are loyal to the Ice and Moon Empire Royal Family. Actually daring to say such disgraceful words, I will deliver you to the Ice God's Pagoda right now." Green light came sweeping out. The surging wind element magic flew to condense around Long Zhi. A great oppressive force slammed into Nian Bing's body, making him unwillingly take a few steps back.

Nian Bing did not say anything. The box containing the Proud Sky Knife was set on the ground before light flashed in his hands. In one hand was the Morning Dew knife; in the other was the Flame God's Stone. "Mighty Fire God! Please allow me to make use of your left hand and let the flame descend to earth to eradicate the

wicked power. Let the blaze illuminate the whole earth and destroy all the barriers obstructing me. — The Fire God's Left Hand." A huge fiery hand suddenly appeared in front of Nian Bing at the end of the chant. Under Nian Bing's control, it rushed towards Long Zhi. Under the amplification of the Flame God's stone, the Fire God's left hand exhibited its maximum strength as the temperature in the hall became sweltering.

Long Zhi coldly snorted. "Like a grain of rice with a bit of light. Allow me to show you the might of a magister." A long green staff measuring almost 2 meters magically appeared in his hand. It bore a mysterious lined pattern on its surface and emitted a faint green light. At the very tip, there were nine green gems which were lined up in a row. Long Zhi pointed the magic staff and called out loudly, "Break."

A huge blade of wind appeared. This blade, which reached almost three meters in length, directly sliced into Nian Bing's Fire God's Hand. With a extremely loud rumble, the Fire God's Left hand actually dissolved into sparks, with the wind blade also shattered to pieces.

As the energy from the spell dispersed, Nian Bing's went pale. He was forced back; inside him, the Ice and Fire Magic Source was fiercely thrashing. Because he had read through almost all of the magic books in the past few days, Nian Bing immediately recognized the magic Long Zhi had used. Dumbstruck, he said, "This is the rank six magic, Wind God's Slash? How could you have instantly casted this magic."

Long Zhi was equally surprised. He had thought that his magic

would've been a lot stronger than Nian Bing's. When a rank 6 spell clashed against a rank 5 spell, the former should have utterly destroyed the latter and still be able to attack. Nian Bing, however, had only been sent back several steps.

“As a magister, instantly casting low rank magic spells is nothing. Of course, I had to rely on the sub-god grade magic staff, Green Underworld, to instantly cast a rank 6 spell. It's such a shame that the Wind God's Slash already reaches its limits. To be able to instantly cast it, magic power is condensed using these nine Green Underworld stones. Moreover, it can only be used to instantly cast a magic once a day. The Green Underworld stones need more time to condense the wind element. With my ability, instantly casting rank 4 magic is even easier. Now, cease fighting and allow yourself to be seized.”

Nian Bing smiled indifferently. He said, “Do you think that I am the kind of person who won't struggle at all and just admit defeat? To be able to exchange blows with a magister is my honor.” While speaking, he returned the Morning Dew Knife to his chest. When his right hand appeared again, four magic scrolls were gripped between his fingertips.

Long Zhi laughed coldly, saying, “Do you think relying on those low-ranked magic scrolls will allow you to match me?”

Nian Bing smiled indifferently and said, “I will admit, in the domain of magic, I am far below you. But, just like a trapped beast will continue to fight, how will I know there's no way for me if I don't try? Don't forget, magic scrolls can be instantly casted.” Having said this, two out of the four scrolls had already been flung

out.

Long Zhi's expression deepened. His eyes shone as he pointed the Green Underworld Staff in his hand, a ball of dazzling green light suddenly appeared. This was also instantly casted magic, however, it was obviously a lot smaller than last time. The spell was the rank 4 Wind Wall Spell. However, he didn't believe that this fourth rank magic could block Nian Bing's attack. He continuously created an additional eight wind walls overlapping with each other, completely obstructing the space in front of him and demonstrating the prowess of a magister. A wild wind blew threw the halls in a moment, and Long Zhi's figure was completely hidden from view.

Something strange happened. Nian Bing had tossed the two magic scrolls, but they were simply carried away by the wind without releasing any magic. Nian Bing smiled strangely. "Ah! Sorry, I just threw out plain scrolls. Hehe."

Hearing Nian Bing's voice, Long Zhi almost spit out blood. The nine Wind Wall Spells were pointless. Not only that, it also prevented him from attacking in return. Snorting coldly, Long Zhi began to speak rhythmically, beginning his magic chant. Although the nine wind walls prevented him from attacking Nian Bing at the moment, it also gave him time to chant. The higher the rank of the magic, the longer it would take to chant the spell. In the midst of the shrieking of the gale, Nian Bing could not hear what magic Long Zhi was chanting at all.

Nian Bing's face became serious. He stuffed the magic scrolls back into his chest while simultaneously drawing the delicate

Icicle Wand. His left arm raised the Flame God's Stone, and he speedily chanted the spell he was best at.

“Mighty Fire God! Please allow me to make use of your left hand and let the flame descend to earth to eradicate the wicked power. Let the blaze illuminate the whole earth and destroy all the barriers obstructing before me. ——The Fire God's Left Hand.” The light of the fire exploded out as a huge, fiery hand appeared on Nian Bing's left. The hall, which had been awash with green light from the wind wall spells, was covered in a red glow.

“Powerful ice element! Condense and turn into the ice from the ancient Cold River, turn into ice from the splendid moon. Ice and ice combine and become two ice balls.” The icicle wand tilted and blue light began to continually condense before it, filling the air with a biting cold. Balls of ice, half light blue and half dark blue, appeared. This was the highest rank magic that Nian Bing could produce currently, the rank 6 magic, Twin Balls of Ice.

The Flame God's stone and the icicle wand were raised high up in the air. Nian Bing's full head of golden hair seemed to be ruffled by a nonexistent wind under the stimulation from the Ice and Fire Magic Source. His skin glowed both red and blue, alternately flashing. The whirlpool of magic inside his body spun to its limits.

Chapter 30.2 – A Skillful Fight Against A Magister

“Ah–” Nian Bing shouted. Red and blue lights surging out from the Flame God’s Stone and the Icicle Rod poured into the two magic spells.

The Fire God’s Left Hand clenched its fist, and the two balls of ice were blocking Nian Bing’s front. Instead of the size of the spells increasing as magic continuously was poured into them, they actually got smaller.

Nian Bing’s face paled as the magic power he was throwing into his spells had already begun to overdraft his reserves.

The green light suddenly receded. Without the continual support of magic power, the nine Wind Wall spells finally disappeared. The two blank scrolls that Nian Bing had sent out before, finally fell to the ground.

Long Zhi’s skin appeared to be covered in a faint layer of green air. It seemed like his entire body had turned green. The oppressive strength that previously disappeared had returned with a vengeance. His profound gaze made the two spells in front of Nian Bing tremble.

Seeing the red and blue balls of light before him, Long Zhi’s eyes were alight. “Good. As I thought, I had not seen wrongly. It really is an Ice and Fire Source. However, do you really think this will have any effect on me?” He swung the Green Underworld staff in

his hands, and a beam of green light immediately hit the opposite wall. The once still wall seemed to be have impassioned by the green light. Red, yellow, blue, green, white, and gold light simultaneously flashed, constantly interchanging. With his knowledge of magic arrays, Nian Bing easily recognized what this was. This was a large-scale control array. Besides attacks with power so great enough to exceed the range of this magic array, the wall behind the spell could not be harmed. It would seem that Long Zhi was planning on using big spells.

Nian Bing did not say a word as he focused his spirit to condense his two magic spells. The Fire God's Left Arm and the Twin Balls of Ice had already shrunk to half their original size.

Long Zhi calmly looked at Nian Bing. "Not bad. Since you already understand the true meaning of magic, I want to see how far you can compress those two magics. The magic I just used is a rank 9 wind element spell that affects my own body. You probably have heard of it; this is the wind mage's barrier known as —The Wind God's Protection. It consumes a lot of magic power. Even with my ability as a magister, I can only hold this spell for an hour. Ordinarily, I would never use this kind of but spell, but it is most suitable to deal with you.

Nian Bing's facial expression changed slightly. Of course he knew of the Wind God's Protection. The power of this rank 9 magic was not its attacking ability. Under the effects of this spell, any wind element spell below the seventh rank could be instantaneously casted with the power consumption reduced by two-thirds. Normally, it would only be used by a wind mage preparing for a siege, or when facing a powerful enemy.

“Soar.” The third rank magic Soaring Spell lifted up Long Zhi into the air. Wherever his foot stepped, a hexagram approximately one meter in diameter would actually appear because of the Wind God’s Protection.

“Aaah——” Nian Bing bellowed again. Under the influence of all of his spirit power, the Fire God’s Left Hand and the Twin Balls of Ice were compressed again by a third. Red and blue balls of light arced through the air from Nian Bing’s two hands to where Long Zhi was flying.

Long Zhi’s eyes were filled with surprise. He had discovered that he had been still underestimating Nian Bing’s magic control.

Pointing the Green Underworld staff in front of him, a swirling green wind immediately appeared. The whirling wind immediately became bigger, completely trapping Nian Bing’s two magics. This was the rank 7 Dragon Twister. Of course, Long Zhi did not believe that a rank 7 spell would completely extinguish Nian Bing’s two compressed spells. He was just feeling him out. Nian Bing’s spells had actually become this powerful.

Nian Bing forced his body, which was on the verge of collapse, to stay standing. The red and blue balls of light that had been flying forward halted as he clapped his hands together violently. His eyes glinted with a strange lustre. With both hands clasped together before him, he yelled out “Ice! Fire! Magic! Source!” The red and blue compressed magic that had stopped, suddenly flew towards the enemy again.

Long Zhi’s facial expression changed. Mentally he cried, Not

good. At this moment, his Dragon Twister that had already been sent out to trap the two balls of light collided with the magic.

“Shabang!” All of the magic element in the hall went wild in an instant. Red and blue light mixed into a huge explosive force that actually caused the rigid Dragon Twister to shatter to pieces. The red and blue rays of light then coalesced into a huge pillar of light that headed straight for Long Zhi and exploded. The expanded light pillar covered almost half of the great hall.

Long Zhi’s brows creased. Because this was the first time he had faced the strange magic of the Ice and Fire Source, he didn’t know how to respond. He waved the Green Underworld staff in his hand. As a giant quantity of magic burst out with a kablam, Dragon Twisters appeared one after the other.

Nian Bing’s whole body weakly fell to the ground as he spat out a mouthful of blood. Overusing his magic reserves had been taxing on his body. After all, whether it was magic power or spirit power, sustaining the Ice and Fire Source magic was a high-consumption activity. He had practiced with this magic before in the Peach Blossom Forest. However, he hadn’t tried out condensing his magic back then. He had used a fifth rank spell and a sixth rank spell in order to keep the balance of power between ice and fire. Under the amplification effect of the Fire God’s Stone, the strength of the Fire God’s Left Hand could rival a six rank spell. Thus, only the rank six Twin Balls of Ice could match with it. If you wanted to display the might of the Ice and Fire Source, the most important requirement was to balance the powers of the ice and fire magic. This way, one magic would not overwhelm the other, but instead give birth to an even greater power.

The whole great hall, along with the surrounding defensive magic array, vibrated very quickly and intensely. It seemed to be unable to withstand the crushing force of the giant amount of magic. As the Ice and Fire Magic Source released all of its giant magic reserve, Nian Bing was only able to faintly sense that there were red and blue colored lights in front of him. He had to rely on the Icicle Rod to support his body so it wouldn't fall back.

Finally, everything came to an end. The magic array in the hall had not been destroyed, but its light had dimmed considerably. A green figure slowly emerged from the leftover energy of the light explosion. Long Zhi's magic gown was heavily wrinkled, his face had gone pale, and the green light on his skin had disappeared from sight.

“Nice. No doubt this is the Ice and Fire Magic Source. I did not think that you could actually use such strong magic. If I were a magic scholar who hadn't been well prepared, perhaps I would have been injured by your move. Based on the fact that the explosive power of the Ice and Fire Magic Source could actually crack my rank 9 Wind God's Protection, its attacking power should be close to rank 9 in strength. It's such a shame that to use this magic, you need time to draw out all of your magic power. Moreover, the execution period is too long. There was enough time for me to chant two or three rank 9 spells. If I were someone else, would I give you such an opportunity?”

Nian Bing forced himself to sit up straight. While watching Long Zhi's warm smile, he said, “President, the Ice and Fire Source is just the state of my magic; it isn't actually a true magic spell. The magic I just used is actually called the Three Stages of Ice and Fire. The first layer is the initial compression. The second is the mixing

in the air.....”

Long Zhi was dumbstruck for a moment. In his heart, he suddenly felt a trace of dread. “Triple-Stage ice and Fire?” Without warning, a ball of fire and a ball of ice appeared right behind Long Zhi. They were the rank 5 spell Fire Bomb and the rank 5 spell Single Ball of Ice. They had not been compressed or amplified by a magic item, but they had appeared so suddenly.

With a giant kablang sound, the two magics crashed into each other, and the gigantic pillar of red and blue light appeared again. It did not have the strength of the previous one, but Long Zhi also did not have time to prepare at all.

In the end, mages were not warriors. Even if their minds were able to respond, there was not enough time to cast any magic. Although this final wave of attack was not strong as before, it at least was close to a rank 7 spell.

Green wind swept out like a dragon, accompanied an angry roar. It was a Dragon Twister like before. With a rumbling sound, the defensive magic array that was on the verge of collapse could not endure the assault of the magic. The six-colored light disappeared, and the gigantic attack soared into the sky. The roof of the building exploded. Bits of tiles and dust sent upwards as the magic crashed into the roof. Long Zhi stumbled forward for a few steps till he was in front of Nian Bing. He waved Green Underworld in his hand and a green Wind Wall appeared above the two people, blocking the bits of tile that fell from the sky. However, the dust could come in from the sides, making Nian Bing and Long Zhi filthy with grime.

When the dust clouds disappeared, Nian Bing and Long Zhi gave each other a look. The two had become dirt people, one standing and one sitting. Suddenly, they laughed heartily at the same time, as if they had agreed on it. His voice full of mirth, Nian Bing said humorously, “It looks like we have the potential to become earth element mages!”

After their laughter abated, Long Zhi glared viciously at Nian Bing. “Stinky brat, compensate me for my losses. Do you know how much that rank 7 magic scroll cost?” At the critical juncture, Long Zhi had no alternative but to use the rank 7 Dragon Twister magic scroll to prevent himself being wounded from behind. It was able to successfully block the final attack of the Three Stages of Ice and Fire. For Nian Bing to have pushed a magnificent mage like Long Zhi into that position could not have been easy.

Nian Bing said with a laugh. “Then how about I pay you two rank 6 magic scrolls? That should be good. Venerable President, how strong are my newly developed delay magic scrolls? It’s such a shame that it’s so difficult to make these things. If not, if they had been two rank 6 scrolls, perhaps you would have needed a rank 8 magic scroll to block them.”

Long Zhi said sourly, “They’re good. I didn’t think that I would not have seen an attack like that coming. If those two scrolls didn’t have the special Ice and Fire Source magic element woven together, they wouldn’t have been able to merge to attack me.”

Nian Bing laughed while looking at Long Zhi. “To be honest, President, I really admire you. In order to display all of my ability

against you, I racked my brains in search of answer. But I discovered that a difference in strength is a difference in strength. If you had wanted to hurt me, I might not have been able to complete even my first spell. The strength of a magister is truly great.”

Flattered by Nian Bing, Long Zhi’s face turned pleasant. “It looks like you knew that I wanted to cooperate with you from the beginning?”

Nian Bing shrugged his shoulders and said, “I didn’t know for sure, but I was eighty percent certain that that was the case. I have been at the Association for some time, and you’re always trying to rope me in here. Even if that didn’t happen, could I not have guessed it from the way you wanted to talk to me? Today, when I was making food, I didn’t deliberately leave clues for you to discover. I just did what I wanted, because not long from now I must leave here. But before I leave, I had hoped that I could obtain the support of a strong mage like you.”

Long Zhi sighed and helped Nian Bing up from the ground. “There is no reason why I wouldn’t cooperate with you. Shutting down the Ice God’s Pagoda can be said to be my heart’s greatest desire. Although I am not considered to be too old, it may be impossible for me to contend with the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Worshipper in this lifetime. You cannot even begin to imagine the difference between a magister and a descended god.....”

When he talked about this subject, he started to mumble. The pair headed for the entrance, only to see a magic scholar leading a group of people that included Long Ling, Shi Jiu and tens of other

magicians, heading straight for them.

Long Zhi's expression deepened. "Why are you making such a fuss? Where are your bearings of a magician?"

Li De, who was in the group of magicians, saw Long Zhi and let out a sigh of relief. He stepped forward and asked, "President, what happened? Why did the roof of the Testing Hall suddenly explode? Could it be that there was a problem with the magic array here?" Seeing Long Zhi and Nian Bing's wretched appearances, the crowd of magicians wanted to laugh but didn't dare to do so.

Long Zhi looked out on the crowd, especially at the few magic scholars. Calmly, he said, "It's good that you have come. I have something to announce. Although Nian Bing is only a Great Mage, I am now formally announcing that he is an elder of the Association. Although this is a little earlier than I had intended, he has been always advancing his studies in the library. Let everybody know today that all must pay him the respect of an elder from now on. As for the magic array, I was just swapping pointers with Nian Bing before we got careless and broke the building. Okay, go back to what you were doing before. Ling'er, Shi Jiu, you two help Nian Bing and send him to his rooms."

Having said this, Long Zhi picked up the box of the Proud Sky Knife from the ground and gave it to Long Ling. Then he wrapped himself in a green wind and flew off. Being covered in grime was a bit too far below his station.

After this, the group of magicians looked at each other in dismay; no one knew what exactly had happened. Li De was muttering to

himself, “The Testing Hall magic array is rank 10, how could it be so easily destroyed? Could it be since it’s been around for so long, the magic power had weakened?”

Long Ling and Shi Jiu supported Nian Bing from either side. When Long Ling saw the bloodstain at the corner of Nian Bing’s mouth, her eyes could not help but show an expression of hurt. Nian Bing had managed to support himself while he was talking to Long Zhi, but after it was over, he immediately fell into a state of half-consciousness.

Chapter 31.1 – A Second Master

Early morning.

Nian Bing could feel the aches all over his body as he stretched languidly, slowly awaking from his dreams. The feeling of the gentle sunlight shining on him was indescribably comfortable. This was the first time he had not meditated to rest, but instead had gotten true sleep in an entire month.

As his consciousness gradually awoke, Nian Bing recalled everything that had happened last night. Since Long Zhi had held back in the fight, Nian Bing was not truly injured. The reason he had spit up blood and lost consciousness was because his magic and spirit power had been depleted. Right now, he was not fully recovered, but it wasn't in the way of him doing anything.

As he slowly sat up in bed, Nian Bing was shocked to discover that someone had changed him into cool, fresh clothing. He immediately touched his chest and was frightened when he found that the Flame God's Stone, Morning Dew Knife, Proud Sky Knife, Holy Brilliance Stone, ghost carving, and the cloth bag containing his utensils was nowhere to be seen. Everything he owned was missing; even the magic scrolls he had bitterly toiled for had disappeared. Thankfully, the one reason that he could stabilize his feelings, the Heavenly Flower Tile, was still in his robes when he checked.

Cold sweat trickled down his forehead. Since he had left the Peach Blossom Forest, this was the first time that Nian Bing had felt such terror. The Flame God's Stone and the Ice and Snow

Goddess' Stone was the last thing his parents had given to him at the Ice and Snow God Pagoda. If they had actually disappeared, how could anything be okay? Did Long Zhi take them? No, there was no way. He was of a great value to Long Zhi. Yesterday, the people who were last to support him were Long Ling and Shi Jiu. The scariest option was Shi Jiu. If it was him that took Nian Bing's belongings then...

Suddenly, the door opened with a small noise that attracted Nian Bing's attention. He immediately laid back down on the bed, resuming his former position.

Light footsteps pattered across the floor before a very soft sound indicated something being placed on the table. A faint fragrance told Nian Bing who it was. From all the girls he knew, only Long Ling used this kind of orchid scent.

"Nian Bing, how come you're not awake yet? Father said, with your abilities, you should have woken up this morning!" As expected, the gentle voice which was full of concern was definitely Long Ling's. Hearing her voice, Nian Bing felt his heart warm up. Long Ling really liked him; she really was such a good girl. Maybe.....

"Nian Bing, wake up soon, okay? Do you know how much you're making me worry? Father already told me that I should get close to you. He places a lot of importance on you. He even, even hopes that you will become my husband. But your attitude to me and Jing Jing is exactly the same. Even Rou'er, who has always been looking higher, was attracted by you. Right now, I don't know what kind of feelings I have for you. Perhaps I really like you, but

you have always been so mysterious. I was afraid. Yesterday, I thought about it the whole night and decided to bury my feelings in the depths of my heart because I don't hope for a husband that I'll have to worry over. Worry that you will suddenly change, worry that you'll be snatched away by some other girl. An ordinary husband will probably be more suited for me. Actually, did you know? Ling'er is really weak and afraid of getting hurt. I don't want you to ever have these kinds of heart aching feelings. From now on, I will regard you as a friend. Looking at you like this is better for me. I am not as smart as Rou'er, and I am not as unyielding as Jing Jing. So I can only give up."

When she said the last part, Long Ling's voice was already choked up with sobs. Nian Bing's heart that had been warming up, once again grew cold. That's right! What can I give Long Ling? She is so warm and gentle, so kind-hearted. She is not suited to be with me. If she was with me, she might even be injured. Her reasoning is correct. Could it be that this girl, who I have always treated so ambiguously has such feelings? Nian Bing, oh Nian Bing. Just as Ling'er says, you can't give her anything. For you, who values father and mother the most, it is best to abandon these things as soon as possible. Men have a road they must walk themselves.

He suddenly felt something soft and moist on his forehead. Nian Bing could only feel his whole body go stiff as the fragrance hit his nostrils. It seems that it was Long Ling's lips. She kissed him softly and murmured, "Nian Bing, I wish you well. I will wish you well forever."

Long Ling walked away and the room again became quiet. Nian Bing sat up once more and looked at the tray on the table next to the bed. The tray had a familiar bowl of congee, two mantou buns,

and a dish of pickles. It was the same breakfast he had every day. Suddenly for no reason, he discovered that his previously ravenous appetite had been replaced with a feeling of being unable to swallow food, a lump rising at his throat.

“Long Ling, sorry. I also wish you well forever and ever. If, there is a day when I return and it’s not too late, I will definitely come find you. And eat your breakfast everyday.”

A new day, a day where the sun is shining, is also a day when Ice and Snow City boils over.

First thing in the morning, the news of the Grand Pavilion’s defeat at the Pure Wind House circulated through the entire city. It was unknown who had circulated the news that Nian Bing’s culinary skills were almost god-like. The name, Magic Chef of Ice and Fire, had been spread to every nook and cranny.

Although Xue Ji had already anticipated this outcome, he didn’t think that it would be this crazy. Early in the morning, the entrance to the Pure Wind House had already been blocked by all the customers who could afford to eat there. Everybody wanted to see what this chef who used magic to cook and could make the Golden Chef Liao Feng admit defeat of his own accord looked like. The business of the Pure Wind House had multiplied several times. In order to maintain order, Xue Ji could only announce that the Nian Bing, the Magic Chef of Ice and Fire, would make only one dish every day. This dish would be auctioned off for guests to taste. The other dishes at the Pure Wind House would not change. Of course, if the Pure Wind House did not have such a power supporting it, there would be some nobles who would come and

cause trouble.

In opposition, whereas the business of the Pure Wind House was booming, the Grand Pavilion's business plummeted. The Grand Pavilion was completely deserted for the entire day. Customers had little pity. The whole Grand Pavilion gave off an abnormal cold. Even the girls responsible for greeting guests at the entrance yawned in boredom.

In the day time, Nian Bing did not go to the library but stayed in his room to meditate the entire day because he needed to recover his lost magic power. At the same time, he needed to calm down and forget the troubles of this morning.

At nightfall, he had recovered a good portion of his magic power and was picked up by a carriage to quietly go to the Pure Wind House. Receiving him was Xue Jing.

“Hey, you blockhead! You didn't say anything the whole way here.” Xue Jing immediately spoke in an unsatisfied tone to Nian Bing upon their arrival to the Pure Wind House. On the way she had told Nian Bing the details of the Pure Wind House's business today. She had almost talked nonstop, but Nian Bing did not even respond in the slightest. He only sat there and listened.

“You wanted me to say something? Jing Jing, this is actually the thing I feared the most. Master told me that if I showed my skills somewhere, I should immediately leave. Since I have made an agreement with Uncle Xue, I have already violated Master's teachings. I feel that this month will be very trying.”

Xue Jing was blank for a moment. Then she asked, “Could it be that you don’t want to be famous?”

Nian Bing’s brow wrinkled as he looked at the menacing girl in front of him. “Do you believe that I learned magic for fame? If you believed that, I can tell you that you were wrong; I have never been motivated by fame. However, since I promised Uncle Xue that I would stay here for a month, I will complete a month’s work.”

Xue Jing looked at Nian Bing. Suddenly she asked, full of concern, “What happened to you today? I feel you’re acting strange.”

Nian Bing shook his head. He said, “Don’t worry. I’m fine. After I’ve finished making a dish, can I please go back to the Association in the carriage? While you’re at it, say thanks for me to Uncle Xue for his understanding.”

Xue Jing said, “Actually, there’s no need for thanks. Father said that the rarer something is, the more precious it is. Making only one dish everyday causes the things you make to be very expensive! Moreover, we don’t want you to be too tired.”

The carriage arrived. Nian Bing followed Xue Jing into the Pure Wind House. In the distance, he heard the sounds of a noisy argument. Unexpectedly, he was overcome with a burst of irritation. After successfully cooking the food, he faintly heard the people in the Pure Wind House yelling prices as he exited from the back door. The highest had already reached twenty purple-gold

coins. One dish is really worth this much?

Since Xue Jing couldn't send Nian Bing back because the Pure Wind house was too busy, he returned to the Mage Association alone. He hadn't seen Long Zhi and daughter all day today. When he had finished meditating it had already been nightfall, so he could only go with Xue Jing to the Pure Wind House. As a result, the whereabouts of his belongings were still unknown.

“Brother, you returned so soon. I thought you would be gone for at least another two hours.” Nian Bing had just descended the Pure Wind House carriage when he heard Shi Jiu's voice come from the Association gatehouse.

“Big Bro, you came to wait for me specially?” Nian Bing asked in surprise.

Shi Jiu smiled as he said, “Yeah! Master made me wait here for you. He wanted me to tell you when you got back. He is there waiting for you. That's right, you owe me one. Yesterday night, I changed your clothes and helped you wash. It was okay, you weren't too dirty. Ai, I don't know why, but Long Ling has been unhappy these days. I was coaxing her all day and there was no change.”

Nian Bing suddenly become aware that Shi Jiu wasn't all that hateful. At the very least, his feelings for Long Ling were genuine. Saying goodbye to Shi Jiu, Nian Bing headed for the library. Since he had returned to the Mage Association his mood had become a lot calmer. The things he wanted to do most right now was to leave behind the clamor of Ice and Snow City as soon as possible. Until

then, however, learning all the necessary magic was the most important thing.

As he stepped onto the third floor of the library, Nian Bing gaze was drawn to a standing Long Zhi. In his hands was a very familiar book. It was the magic array book Nian Bing had been reading yesterday.

Closing the book, Long Zhi's gaze turned to Nian Bing. "You've returned."

Nian Bing walked up to Long Zhi, "Have you been waiting for me this whole time?"

Long Zhi smiled faintly and said, "I have waited here the whole day because I wanted to know why, that if we do the same thing, you can produce different results. Could you tell me the answer?"

Nian Bing smiled slightly and answered, "Comprehension."

"It's that simple?"

Nian Bing nodded his head, and grabbed the magic book from Long Zhi's hands. He said, smiling, "Actually, the answer is not in here. It is on the second floor. There's a book of basic magic theory there. President, if you have the opportunity you should read it very carefully. The reason I can make magic arrays with such efficacy is not entirely because my magic control exceeds my magic power. You should understand that the most important thing is

that I did not just rote memorize these things. Instead, I added them to my understanding. Comprehension of the implications of the magic arrays.

Long Zhi's eyes twinkled. "Comprehension. It's a good word."

Nian Bing smiled as he spoke. "Actually, the first day I learned cooking from my master, he taught me that learning culinary arts does not rely solely on practice. Although it is admittedly important, finding a good way to practice, can let you do half the work with twice the success. Finding this way can only be discovered by your own comprehension. Every person has their own forte. Finding the straightest road makes for the shortest time to reach your destination. It's like this for cooking, and it's the same for magic."

Long Zhi smiled. "Young'un, do you know why I was waiting for you here today?"

Nian Bing shook his head.

Long Zhi smiled slightly, "I wanted to be your teacher. But I didn't think that I would be getting a lesson from you instead. Right now, I am doubtful whether I have the qualifications to be your master."

Nian Bing's eyes glowed. "Of course you have the qualifications. Your years of magic experience is far greater than mine."

Long Zhi sighed and said, “Not true. In terms of overall magic understanding, I am probably better than you. Towards understanding the true meaning of magic however, you are already above me. I hope that you can agree to a condition of mine.” He paused here.

Nian Bing watched Long Zhi. He knew that this condition would be extremely important for the relationship between him and Long Zhi. If he agreed then Long Zhi would continue to help him without hesitation. In the present situation, did he have any choice? Of course not. To have the help of a magister, a magister who shared a mutual enemy would save innumerable time and energy. He did not have any reason to refuse the condition. Nodding his head, Nian Bing said, “Tell me, and I will do it.”

Chapter 31.2 – A Second Master

Long Zhi's smile disappeared; in its place was a serious expression. "I hope that when I die, you will take over my position and take care of Ling'er for me. Can you promise me this?"

Nian Bing smiled bitterly and said, "You seemed to have posed two conditions. What do you mean by take care of?"

Long Zhi sighed lightly before saying, "I am a father. I only wish for my daughter's happiness. If you can make Ling'er happy, then I don't care about anything else. This may seem like a vain promise, but at least, while I am alive, I have the ability to take care of my daughter."

Nian Bing sighed secretly. He nodded and said, "I will take care of her as best I can. If one day you are fast approaching death, come find me." His tone of voice was calm, but his words were heavy. This was the first time in his life that Nian Bing had made such a promise.

Long Zhi smiled. "A man's oath has no need for words. And the other condition?"

Nian Bing's brows creased. He said, "I know you hope that the Ice and Moon Empire Mage Association will one day become great, but you should understand that the present Association is a terrible mess."

Long Zhi laughed out loud. He said, "Of course it's a terrible

mess. If the situation was not so dire, why would I have made such a condition? The title of president sounds nice, but the mages under my command only numbers in the tens. My Mage Association cannot compare to other empires who have hundreds of Great Mages at the least. However, I believe that this situation will improve if you inherit it in the future. Of course, I will work hard and dedicate my life to pave the way for you. This condition is the most crucial point.”

Nian Bing took a deep breath, feeling that the burden on his shoulders had become much heavier. “Since I do not have any choice in the matter, I will agree. However, I cannot fulfill this promise for at least eight years. I need to honor my master’s final wishes. Eight years later, I will return here and start my fight with the Ice God’s Pagoda.”

Long Zhi’s eyes exuded a light of excitement. “Okay. We will seal the deal with a word. Kneel.”

Nian Bing stepped back and with a plop, both knees hit the ground. Deferentially, he said, “The disciple pays his respects to master.” Having said this, he kowtowed to Long Zhi three times in respect.

After Long Zhi had calmly received his greetings, he helped Nian Bing up. “Nian Bing, did you know that having a magister as a master is a lifelong dream for some mages? But looking at you, you don’t seem all that excited.”

Nian Bing smiled while saying, “Do you think I should be happier? After all, we are in a mutually beneficial relationship.”

Long Zhi spoke honestly. “I will concede that point, but you are my disciple and have made a promise to me. From now on, I will not withhold anything from you, just as I don’t from Ling’er. I had originally placed all my hopes onto Ling’er, but she is a girl. I had many worries, but now, your presence has improved the situation.”

Nian Bing said, “As a man, when I say something, it is like the water that rushes forward. My promise will definitely be completed. Although I cannot guarantee that the the Association will improve in my hands, it will not get any worse.”

Long Zhi smiled and said, “Masters pass down wisdom, teach, and dispel doubts. Right now, I should fulfill my duties. From now on, this will be your classroom until you leave Ice and Snow City.”

Nian Bing asked in surprise: “You don’t seem like you want me to stay.”

Long Zhi nodded and said, “Yeah, that’s right. You cannot stay here. Do you know who came here before?”

Nian Bing was blank. He asked, “Who?”

Long Zhi sucked in a deep breath and said, “It was Liao Feng. Yesterday, your fame was too great. Liao Feng is proud, but he has principles of justice. He disdains performing underhanded dealings. He told me that Jin Hao from the Grand Pavilion is preparing to deal with you by investigating whether or not you are

the person that the Ice and Snow Goddess Worshipper is looking for. They also sent a letter to the royal family to encourage the king to make you enter the palace kitchens. These two things, no matter which succeeds, will be extremely disadvantageous for you. As a result, you need to leave Ice and Snow City. Moreover, you need to leave in secret.”

Nian Bing was startled, but he quickly regained his cool. “I did not leave behind a trace of my actions. It won’t be so easy for them to find out whether or not I am the person that the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Worshipper is looking for. The more troublesome thing is inducting me into the royal palace. However, the Ice and Moon City is not near here. Even if a quick horse was running all out, it would take at least half a month to get here.”

Long Zhi nodded his head and said, “That’s right. It takes at least half a month to get to the Ice and Snow City from the Ice Moon City. However, His Majesty, the king has troops in the surroundings of Ice Moon City. Even if you have a passport, you will be held back by the investigation process for a couple of days. The troops garrisoned here are the Soul Exterminating Royal Knights Division. The Knights’ highest commander is Big Brother’s Xue’s blood brother, Xue Po. If we use a magic wind pigeon to send him a letter, Marshal Xue Po can extend the time to at least two months. If we do that, I should have ample time to transmit all my knowledge to you.”

Nian Bing said, “Two months should be enough.” In two months, the inlaying of the True Sun Knife should be finished.

Long Zhi said, “Then we will begin. Nian Bing, I hope that you

can tell me everything about the circumstances of the special magic power of the Ice and Fire Source.”

Nian Bing nodded and said, “My father and mother were mages. Originally, I was following my father and cultivating fire magic. The year I turned ten, I followed my father to go to the Ice God’s Pagoda and meet my mother, but we were blocked by the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Worshipper. Father was far from being an opponent to the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Worshiper. At the final moment, he used all his strength to block the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Worshiper while giving me the Flame God’s Stone and the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Stone. He made me use a spatial shift scroll to flee the dire situation. If my guess is not wrong, mother and father had been afraid of getting killed for some time.” He spoke very simply, not getting into too much detail about the circumstances. However, a deep-abiding hatred was leaking from his eyes.

Long Zhi’s brow creased. “You said that your mother was part of the Ice God’s Pagoda? The Ice God’s Pagoda has a rule that their females are prohibited from marrying. But if you were 10 years old and your mother was still alive, her position in the Ice God’s Pagoda should’ve been pretty high.”

Nian Bing replied coldly. “High? What’s the use of having a high position? That must be a secret only known by the Ice God’s Pagoda. I can’t speak about the particulars of the situation; that year is too bitter for me to remember. I hate them, but I don’t just hate the Ice God’s Pagoda. I also hate the people who chased after me. In order to escape being murdered by the experts from the Ice God’s Pagoda, I jumped into the Azure Sky River. After being slammed about by the rushing water, I had thought then that I was

going to die before I was fished out by my master's fishnet. I received another chance at life. My teacher is the one famed throughout the continent, Demon Chef Zha Ji. Master saw my beginner rank magic and was extremely excited. After he made me his disciple, he started to fully devote himself to passing down his culinary arts to me. At the same time, I started cultivating magic. At that time I was surprised to discover that there was a cold stream in my body....." Nian Bing explained the details his magic cultivation.

After he finished listening to Nian Bing's narration, Long Zhi hesitated. "So if it's as you said, that jade on your chest actually awakened your will and fused two kinds of magic together. Nian Bing, did you know that you did not achieve true fusion? You have always been in such a dangerous area!"

Nian Bing smiled bitterly. "Of course I know that. If it was not the case, then why would I come to the Association? I had only one goal in coming here, and that was because I hoped I would find information about the Ice and Fire Source. I hope that I can resolve the hidden dangers of my internal magic."

After thinking over this, Long Zhi said in a deep voice, "It will be very difficult. If I am honest, there isn't any information pertaining to the Ice and Fire source even on the fourth floor of the library. I'm afraid that the other Mage Associations of other countries also don't have any. Because the Ice and Fire Magic Source only exists in legends, after all."

Nian Bing's heart went cold. Questioning him further, he asked, "Then is there any other way? Don't tell me that I will really die? I

have a feeling that if my magic reaches a certain level, the Ice and Fire whirlpool will collapse. At that time, they will mutually destroy each other. Perhaps my body would even explode.”

Long Zhi shook his head and said, “No, you don’t need to be that pessimistic. Based on your present condition, it would take a thousand years for you to meet such an end. Since you already can maintain the balance between ice and fire, I can confirm that your body already has a special constitution. With the additional years from constant cultivation, your body has gradually adapted to having both ice and fire elements in it. Right now, you only need an opportunity. In special circumstances, your ice and and fire elements might actually be able to fuse together. When that happens, you will truly become the only Ice and Fire Source Mage on the continent. Didn’t you mention something about comprehension earlier? If you want to fuse them, you will need to raise your comprehension. Right now, we don’t know how much the ice and fire whirlpool can hold. Before it becomes saturated, you need to understand its mysterious properties.” While saying this, Long Zhi grabbed Nian Bing’s hand, and gently sent wind element into Nian Bing’s body.

Nian Bing felt like a spring breeze was blowing around his body while he was wrapped in wind element. After a long while, Long Zhi released his hand. He did not say anything. He waved his empty right hand and the Morning Dew Knife wrapped in cloth, along with the Flame God’s Stone, simultaneously appeared in his hands. He separated the two magic items and put them in either of Nian Bing’s hands. He then again gripped his wrists.

Time passed second by second, until an hour had passed. Long Zhi let out a long sigh and released Nian Bing.

“Good. The Ice and Snow Goddess’ Stone and the Flame God’s Stone are no doubt top class gems. To have reached your present state is undoubtedly because of the existence of these stones. I clearly felt that your inner ice and fire whirlpool spun faster when these two gems were in your hands. In order to keep this whirlpool, you must maintain the rotation, so that the ice and fire will not consume each other. As long as you keep these gems on your person, unless your magic surpasses the level of what your body can contain, the whirlpool will always keep spinning. On top of that, that piece of warm jade on your breast lends a stabilizing effect. There won’t be a problem.”

Nian Bing’s heart was a bit calmer when he asked, “Master, if my whole body is filled with magic power, then what realm would I be in?”

Long Zhi smiled slightly and said, “You should be entering the realm of a magister when your magic power fills your whole body, though that is still a long ways off. If you fail to discover a way to understand the mysteries of the Ice and Fire Source by then, we can seal your body. This would prevent your magic power from increasing. Although you would have no way of ever reaching the highest realm of magic, you can at least retain your life. With power approaching that of a magisters, along with the Ice and Fire Source, your strength should not be any weaker than mine.

With Long Zhi’s explanation, Nian Bing, who had always been bewildered by the problems of the Ice and Fire Source, came to a sudden realization. Although he had no way to solve his problem at the moment, knowing that his life was not in immediate danger improved his mood greatly. At least, he would be able to relax in

his future cultivation. Nian Bing had confidence that his comprehension was not bad; moreover, he had already found an idea for his solution through concepts he had grasped from magic arrays. It was just that he was not too familiar with said concepts yet.

“Master, thank you. I think that the Ice and Fire Source will not be a problem for me.”

Long Zhi smiled slightly and said, “Since you have acknowledge me as your teacher, I have to accept you as my disciple. I will give you a present. Yesterday, when I sent Ling’er and Shi Jiu to bring you to your rooms, I recalled that you had lots of treasures on you. In that unconscious state, it was not appropriate for you to carry those things on you. And thus, I went to retrieve your things. Did you not think it was strange that the Flame God’s Stone and your cold knife suddenly appeared? You see, it actually was placed inside of here.” While saying this, Long Zhi extended his right arm to Nian Bing.

Nian Bing only saw a black ring on Long Zhi’s hand. The ring was very plain: an unremarkable ring made of iron. Long Zhi took of the ring and said with a smile, “Don’t underestimate it. This is a dark gold grade magic item. Ai, our Association is really too poor. We really have so few magic items! This ring is called the space ring, a spatial storage magic item cast out of special metal. You should know that normally, when a mage goes out, he has to bring lots of stuff with him. But with our bodies being so weak, how could we carry so many things? The space ring type magic item is necessary equipment for any Advanced Mage. In general, the ring is the best because it is small and extremely easy to carry. This ring can store up to 10 cubic meters of things. I’ve already put your

treasures inside here.” While speaking, Long Zhi flicked his wrist. Some magic power went into the ring and his Green Underworld Staff immediately appeared out of thin air.

Chapter 32.1 – Luo Rou Begs

Giving Nian Bing the ring, Long Zhi said, “Wear it, nothing of mine remains inside any longer. Even though it is a space magic item, any kind of magic power can be poured into it because of an ingenious magic array. By inputting your power, your items can be stored inside.

Putting the ring on, Nian Bing subconsciously sent some of his spiritual power to probe inside. As expected, he could sense a large space with his possessions. With a thought, he poured magic power into the ring. Under the control of his magic power, the Morning Dew Knife and Flame God’s Stone in his hands were transferred into the space.

He felt a burst of excitement. This was currently what Nian Bing needed the most. Immediately, he turned to Long Zhi and said, “Master, thank you.”

Long Zhi laughed then said, “As a master, this is the sentence that I want to hear most. Okay, we shall begin studying. If you don’t understand something, ask me.”

From that day on, Nian Bing lived a disciplined life. Besides the necessary washing of his face, he and Long Zhi scarcely left the library. Their food and drink were personally delivered by Long Ling. Under Long Zhi’s instruction, Nian Bing was able to understand the books he read much more easily. With Long Zhi sharing his insights and experiences, Nian Bing no longer needed to mull things over on his own. Although the two of them practiced different kinds of magic, Nian Bing’s range of magic

understanding had deepened with Long Zhi's help. The speed at which he read the books on the third floor increased dramatically. Every night at the same time, the Pure Wind House carriage would come pick up Nian Bing. He would hurriedly go there and just as hurriedly return. Studying magic was his greatest desire.

Unwittingly, it was already the final day of Nian Bing and Xue Ji's promise. Although a month had passed, the Pure Wind House's business was still exploding, especially since Nian Bing had not repeated a signature dish for thirty days. The prices, which had started at tens of purple-gold coins, had clambered up to the present value of over a hundred purple-gold coins.

After finishing today's dish, Nian Bing did not hurriedly leave as he had before. These days, he always used Ming Yuan's special stove to cook. Every time he cooked, he would always ask Ming Yuan to stand next to him and watch. He would try to make his movements as slow as possible so Ming Yuan could see them much more clearly.

"Master Ming, did you clearly see what I just did now?" Nian Bing washed his hands clean, then took off the chef's hat on his head.

Ming Yuan sincerely nodded his head and said, "I would not have been able to before. Nian Bing, I truly must thank you for teaching me many things this month! Although you are younger than me, it should be I who calls you master." Having said this, he bowed to Nian Bing.

Nian Bing jumped in fright and immediately helped Ming Yuan

up. “Master Ming, you really, really don’t need to behave like that. Although we only interact with each other for less than a hour these days, your insights have been extremely helpful to me. We have helped each other. This is the nature of exchanging pointers.”

Ming Yuan said seriously, “Nian Bing, did you know? Up until now, I had always believed that it would difficult for me to advance my culinary arts. But in this month, you have let me observe your own cooking methods without any reservations and have explained all its mysteries to me. I think that if Liao Feng were to return right now, he wouldn’t be able to beat me. You have allowed me to see another door in the culinary arts. Even if you didn’t use magic, you would be a top-class chef!”

Nian Bing smiled slightly but didn’t say anything else. He lifted the curtain and walked out. Ten meters away from Ming Yuan, he was frightened by the sight in front of him; all of the chefs had stopped their work and were looking at him respectfully.

“What is everyone doing? There are more customers outside waiting. Everyone, continue working.”

“They are thanking you, just like I am thanking you. Nian Bing, you have raised the entire Pure Wind House to new heights!” Turning toward the voice, Nian Bing discovered Xue Ji and his daughter. Following Xue Ji’s lead, thunderous applause came from all sides. Under the gazes of admiration, Nian Bing could not help but get fired up. After all, he was still young.

“Uncle Xue. Thank you for taking care of me the past few days.” Nian Bing spoke respectfully to Xue Ji.

Xue Ji smiled and said, “No, it was me who was taken care of by you. I wish that this month could be delayed indefinitely! But I know that you are an eagle and need to fly off to distant lands. Me and Brother Long have already spoken about your departure, so you don’t need to worry that I will try to keep you here. I only hope that you will have time to return and take a look.”

Nian Bing thought for a moment before saying, “Uncle Xue, I think that you should continue with the auctions. I think Master Ming’s ability should be able to keep up. Tomorrow, you should go through the auction first before announcing the news that I have left. The people who will have tried Master Ming’s dish should not be dissatisfied.”

Ming Yuan came forward at this moment. Nodding, he said, “What Nian Bing said is reasonable. As long as they are not true connoisseurs, it would be hard for them to taste the difference between my food and Nian Bing’s. Nian Bing, I really want to know what percent of your true skills you have used. I understand, that in order for the Pure Wind House to continue on, you didn’t go all out, right?”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “It was about seventy percent.”

Ming Yuan sighed and said, “I can’t even reach seventy percent. Cooking really has no limits. I hope that you will continue to advance.”

Nian Bing nodded and said, “That is my goal. Relax, I will

definitely work hard to progress.” While saying this, he poured magic power into the space ring on his finger. Ten magic scrolls along with a piece of paper immediately appeared in his hands. Every scroll was bound with a different colored ribbon.

Nian Bing passed the scrolls and the paper to Xue Jing. “These are my promised scrolls. Every one is the fruit of my blood. I have clearly indicated each of their functions on the piece of paper. They are all dual magic scrolls. In times of danger, you only need to open the scrolls to use them.”

Xue Jing took the scrolls, but did not look at them. Her eyes exuded a faint light as she asked softly, “Are you really leaving?”

Nian Bing nodded his head resolutely. “I have chosen the path I must walk, and I will not turn back.”

Xue Ji said, “Jing Jing, send Nian Bing back.”

Xue Jing sighed softly. She took the lead and headed outside of the kitchen. After saying his goodbyes to Xue Ji, Ming Yuan, and all the other chefs, Nian Bing followed her out.

The night was quiet, with only the occasional sound of the breeze blowing through the tree leaves, disturbing the silence. As he walked down the alleyway to the back gate of the Pure Wind House, the sweet odor of the plants tickled his face.

“Nian Bing, do you hate me?” Xue Jing, who had been walking in

the front, suddenly stopped.

Nian Bing walked up to her. “Why do you say that?”

Xue Jing turned around. Looking at Nian Bing, she said, “If that’s not so, then why are you always avoiding me?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “Don’t you like Yan Feng? If he was looking for you and he saw you with me, wouldn’t there be a misunderstanding?”

Xue Jing’s voice suddenly went several notches higher. “What? That is your reason? Don’t tell me you didn’t know that during the competition between the Pure Wind House and the Grand Pavilion, Yan Feng had already left Ice and Snow City because he was called back by His Majesty, the King?”

Nian Bing was blank. Then he said, “I really did not know. Besides the Pure Wind House, I have always been at the Mage Association Library for the past few days. How could I have known?” Although he said this, it was lucky that Yan [Ju Hua](#) had already left. If he had tried to find Nian Bing, the latter really did not know how to face him.

Ju Hua, or 菊花, is Chinese slang for anus. I think.

Xue Jing snorted and said, “Never mind. Go.”

“Oh. I will go. Probably, when I leave the Ice and Snow City, I will not notify you guys.” Having said this, Nian Bing strode in the

direction of the back gate.

“You’re really going!” Xue Jing’s unsatisfied voice came from behind, making Nian Bing unable to help turning around.

A red cloud pounced on him fiercely. Nian Bing’s body shook and nearly lost its balance. Subconsciously, he embraced Xue Jing’s supple and delicate body. His shoulder hurt. When he lowered his head to look, he saw that Xue Jing was biting down hard on his shoulder. Nian Bing did not move; he did not cry out in pain. He only forced a smile as he looked at the fierce, menacing maiden in his arms.

Xue Jing pushed Nian Bing back fiercely. In a biting tone, she said, “Get out of here, you heartless person.”

Seeing her bright red eyes, Nian Bing sighed silently. Right now, he did not dare to linger on. He quickly exited the Pure Wind House. Watching his receding figure, Xue Jing suddenly smiled slightly. “Hmph. Go ahead and leave. You may have legs, but this miss has legs too.”

Exiting the Pure Wind House, Nian Bing did not sit on the prepared carriage. He slowly walked through the roads. He had been constantly studying magic these past few days, and needed a moment to relax.

He was walking not far from the center of the road. Suddenly, the sounds of hooves and wheels appeared caused Nian Bing to turn his head. In his mind he thought, Could it be that carriage is

chasing after me? It wasn't the Pure Wind House's, but Nian Bing recognized it.

The carriage stopped next to him. Luo Rou's pretty mien that seemed to look down at people from above stuck out from the carriage. "Get in."

Nian Bing wrinkled his brow and said, "Thanks for the good intentions miss, but I will walk by myself."

Luo Rou was a bit displeased when she spoke, "Am I like a surging flood and wild beasts? Besides the first time I've seen you, why do you always run away whenever you see me?"

Nian Bing forced a smile and said, "Miss, did you forget? You are someone with a fiancé. It is inappropriate for a single male and female to be alone together."

Luo Rou's eyes suddenly exuded a faint hurt. "Will you get in or not?" Although it was a request, an extreme fragility could be heard from her tone. Nian Bing did not hold any ill will for Luo Rou, so he finally stepped into the carriage.

Sitting across from Luo Rou, Nian Bing looked at her as he asked, "Miss Wise Girl, what did seek me out for?"

Luo Rou looked at Nian Bing. At this time, she was still looking fragile. "Nian Bing, call me Rou'er. Since we are friends, I waited outside for you because it is your last day at the Pure Wind House."

Nian Bing looked at Luo Rou and said, “You seem to be worried about something? In Ice and Snow City, you could be said to be a daughter of heaven. Even Jing’er and Ling’er are not any better than you. But you still have difficulties?”

Luo Rou nodded her head and said, “Of course I have them. Do you know why everyone, including those officials, are so respectful to me? It isn’t because of my intelligence, but because of my marriage.”

Nian Bing’s heart jumped. He said, “So what you’re saying is that your fiancé has a very high status in the Ice Moon Empire?”

Luo Rou replied, “That’s right. My fiancé is the fifth prince of His Majesty, the king of the Ice Moon Empire. He is the most beloved prince and has the greatest chance of succeeding the kingship. Since I was small, I have always loved to show off my intelligence. This brought me a lot of honor, but how could my young self know that it would also bring me the greatest of troubles. I was unaware that my exploits had reached the royal palace. At that time, my father was still a lowly baron. I don’t know where His Majesty, the King learned of it, but he personally called in my father and I to the imperial banquet. His Majesty asked me three difficult problems. At my young age, I was impetuous, and answered all of them correctly. My greatest troubles started at that year.”

Nian Bing then said, “His Majesty, the king, definitely admires your brilliance. With your appearance and noble background, he decided to betroth you to the fifth prince, right? Since the fifth prince has the favor of His Majesty, the King, then he must not be

too bad. If that is the case, then there shouldn't be anything wrong with marrying him."

Luo Rou snorted and said, "Nothing wrong with marrying him? Don't tell me you haven't heard of the phrase, 'entering the palace is like submerging yourself in the deep sea?' The fifth prince is definitely outstanding, with his looks also being top of the line. But his abilities are also displayed in other areas. According to what I've heard, he currently has sixteen concubines. Do you think that I'd be happy marrying that kind of guy? At most, I will be the queen, but that's not the kind of life I want to live. I am already eighteen years old. I will turn twenty in two years and marry the fifth prince who is two years older than me. You said I don't have any troubles?"

Nian Bing replied, "So what are you going to do? Marry him or not?"

Lu Rou replied in distress, "Of course I will marry him. Do I have any right to choose? I have to think of my father and mother. If I marry the fifth prince, father's position will shoot up. If I don't marry, my family might suffer a calamity. I really do not have a choice."

"Rou'er, I don't understand what you want. You didn't find me today just to tell me these things." Nian Bing discovered that he had been moved by Luo Rou. He directly cut to the chase. He hoped his own problems wouldn't be complicated by her.

Chapter 32.2 – Luo Rou Begs

Luo Rou's facial expression changed slightly. With a soft sigh, she said, "I heard that you will soon be leaving to travel the continent. I need you to help me send a letter to the Profound Orchid Empire. However, this letter must not be intercepted by anyone from the Ice Moon Empire. If you help me, I might not have to marry the fifth prince."

Nian Bing asked, "Who in the Profound Orchid Empire should I send it to?"

Luo Rou answered, "Send it to the youngest daughter of Marquis Lan Yu in the Profound Orchid Empire. Correction, Marquis Lan Yu became a duke last year. His daughter is called Lan Chen. Duke Lan Yu is very famous in the Profound Orchid Empire. You will definitely hear of him there. Anyway, since the Ice Moon Empire and the Profound Orchid Empire border each other, you can help me, right?"

Delivering a letter was not such a hard thing to do. After all, this related to Luo Rou's lifelong happiness. Nian Bing nodded his head and said, "I hope that there won't be any trouble."

Luo Rou said happily, "If you say that, then you've promised." While saying this, she pulled out a letter from her chest, along with a bead that gave off a soft, white light. She gave the items to Nian Bing and said, "This bead is a token. With the letter, Lan Chen will definitely believe you."

Nian Bing took them and was surprised to discover that the glossy bead gave off a familiar feel. It was actually made of mutton fat jade. He didn't examine the items very closely, putting the bead and the letter into his space ring with a wave of his hand..

The carriage stopped in front of the entrance to the Mage Association. Nian Bing said to Luo Rou, "I will do my best to deliver your letter. I must go now, goodbye."

"Wait a moment." Luo Rou suddenly came close to Nian Bing and kissed his cheek softly. The faint fragrance suddenly stunned Nian Bing for a moment. Luo Rou's eyes showed that she was touched. "Nian Bing, thank you. If I gave you trouble before, please forgive me. You are actually a good person."

Touching his face, Nian Bing's heart swelled with a strange emotion. A good person? He was really a good person? It was not long ago when Xue Jing called him a heartless person.

Half a month had passed. On the fourth floor of the Ice and Moon Empire Mage Association library, Nian Bing was focused on learning a magic chant by heart. Long Zhi's hopes for Nian Bing were really high. Twenty days before, after learning the information on the third floor, Long Zhi permitted him to enter the fourth floor to continue his studies. Compared to the third floor, the fourth floor had fewer books. There was barely a shelf full of books. However, the magic knowledge on this floor was extremely profound. Even though Nian Bing was considered smart, he could only memorize the information and then slowly understand it.

On the fourth floor, there was every kind of rank 11 forbidden spells. Although there were extremely few of them, these spells were the Associations' most prized possession. Ordinary magic was divided into ten ranks. Upon reaching the eleventh rank, they were called forbidden spells. The highest spells of the twelfth rank were called descended god spells. They were known as the forbidden of the forbidden.

“Nian Bing.” Long Zhi lifted the restrictions on that floor, and came up from down below, interrupting Nian Bing's memorization.

“Master, you said that right now, I only need to memorize these things. Is there no need to explain them?” Nian Bing looked at Long Zhi with a bit of surprise. Although he had acknowledged Long Zhi as his master before, his heart had remained guarded. But as Long Zhi selflessly taught him, he seemed to see Zha Ji's figure, and his wariness gradually dissolved.

Long Zhi's facial expression was a little ugly as he turned to Nian Bing. “Tomorrow, you need to leave. I have just received news that His Majesty, the king, has heard of you. He has shown great interest in your culinary skills and has already sent a magic wind pigeon to Marquis Nuo Ya. The magic wind pigeon is swift; it will arrive in Ice and Snow City in three days. You need to leave tomorrow.”

Nian Bing always knew that he had to eventually leave Ice and Snow City, but suddenly hearing the words from Long Zhi, he could not help but feel uncomfortable. Still, he nodded his head and said, “Master, I have almost finished memorizing all the stuff

here; in fact, I should be done by tonight. I understand a bit of it. Anyways, I haven't packed up all my stuff yet, so I will leave first thing tomorrow. I have not gone outside in all these days, so the Grand Pavilion people shouldn't know that I'm still in the city.

Long Zhi snorted coldly and said, "If you think like that, you're simply looking down on them too much. I discovered earlier that there are people observing the Association. It seems that they are afraid you will run away. Your existence has always been a threat to the Grand Pavilion."

Nian Bing nodded his head and said, "I understand. Master, do you have anything else to teach me?"

Long Zhi did not say anything but walked to the front of the sole bookshelf, hesitated for a moment, then took out a magic book from the topmost shelf. Nian Bing had already read that book. It accounted the effects of a forbidden magic spell. When he was reading it, Nian Bing had been frightened by the mighty power of the spell.

Long Zhi held up the book in his hands, sighed lightly, and said, "I had originally not planned on teaching you this magic. I hope even more that you will never have to use it. But right now, I think that it would be better to teach you. Although the danger is extremely great, it could be the best way to save your life."

Nian Bing looked at Long Zhi with suspicion. He asked, "Master, what is this spell that makes it hard for you to talk about it?"

Green light poured out of Long Zhi's finger and the lively wind element danced through the air. The green light created by the finger traced a strange pattern on the surface of the magic book. A familiar magic array appeared and Nian Bing immediately knew that it was a simple magic array that revealed things that were hidden.

The light flashed and the magic book didn't seem to change. Long Zhi flipped open the book. The original first page had disappeared and small golden words appeared in its place. He passed the book to Nian Bing and said with a heavy voice, "Memorize this spell, but please do NOT say it out loud. You must clearly remember every single word."

The chant was very long. Nian Bing did not pay attention to the contents but did as Long Zhi had said. He imprinted the words deep in his mind. When he had finished memorizing it, he lifted his head to ask, "Master, what is this spell?"

A light in Long Zhi's eyes flashed and he said, "This is an ancient curse spell. It is the greatest secret of our Association."

Nian Bing's whole body shuddered and he said, "Curse spell? Isn't that a dark magic thing? According to the annals, dark magic was lost a long time ago."

Long Zhi shook his head and said, "No, dark magic still exists. It's just that because dark magicians are always hunted down by assassins of the continent, they have hidden themselves. Also, there are extremely few of them. Dark magic is an extremely mysterious magic. It can produce special effects that no other

system of magic could replicate. But I can tell you that this spell does not belong in the category of dark magic. It is a special curse magic from ancient times. Only I knew of its existence, but now you are the second person.”

Nian Bing asked with curiosity, “What sort of effects does it have?”

Long Zhi replied, “Its effects are very simple. It curses yourself.”

“Curses yourself?” Even if Nian Bing was bright, he could not understand what Long Zhi had said.

“That’s right. It curses the caster. By cursing your own life, your strength can reach extreme heights. This special curse magic can allow you to surpass your limits in an instant. The strength of the curse can be controlled. According to the weakness or potency of the curse, the strength you obtain will differ accordingly. It’s name is the Song of Cursed Life.”

Nian Bing’s eyes flashed. “Master, I want to know what the maximum strength of this spell is.”

Long Zhi looked at Nian Bing. He replied, “A very frightening strength. Rank 11 forbidden spells and rank 12 descended god spells have completely different strengths. The Ice and Snow Goddess’ worshiper used a descended god spell to extinguish one hundred thousand troops of the Clear Wood Empire. That’s the reason she has such a high status today. If I used the curse on my own life and used a forbidden spell, I might not be able to achieve that kind of

effect, but I would be able to fight against the Ice and Snow Goddess' Worshipper for two hours with no problem. This is the advantage of the curse. You must remember not to use this spell unless you're in a life or death crisis. Every time you use this spell, it will at least consume five years of your life force. Do you understand?"

Nian Bing nodded his head and said, "Master, I know. It must only be used to save my life."

Long Zhi nodded his head and said, "It's good that you understand. By the way, I have another matter to discuss. It is the ninth month right now, but on seventh day of the seventh month of next year, the Rising Mage Tournament will be held in the capital of the Harmonic Flower Empire. I hope that you can participate and represent the Association. You only need to show the participation plate to take part. Every empire can send two up and coming mages. They must be less than twenty-five years of age, but other than that there is no restriction. One of the two mages of the Ice and Moon Empire is picked by the Ice God's Pagoda, and the other is picked by our Association. Every time, the person our Association sends acts as a foil. I hope that you can give you master something to fight with. Of course, you don't need to promise anything. This isn't within the scope of our original agreement, after all. I will give you the participation plate. Whether you go or not is up to you." While saying this, he pulled out a shiny black plate and gave it to Nian Bing. The plate gave off an obvious aura of magic. On the front was a complex magic array. Even Nian Bing could not determine its characteristics. The plate also had a number written on it, the number ten.

"Did you see it? The number is ten. This was the rank we got last

time we participated in the contest.” Long Zhi’s voice was sorrowful.

Nian Bing took the plate and put it into his space ring. With a small smile, he said, “Master, if it’s along the way then I will go.”

Long Zhi took a scroll and gave it to Nian Bing. “You brat, can’t you give me a definite answer? This space scroll can directly transport you to a small alley near the Pure Wind House back gate from here. I want to see if the Grand Pavilion can see you then. Leave whenever you decide to. Don’t say goodbye to me. I don’t like those kinds of feelings. As for Ling’er, I will say goodbye to her for you. Finally, let me just remind you to not forget about the things you have promised me. From now on, your success will all depend on you.”

Long Zhi left. Nian Bing put the scroll into his space ring. Finally leaving? This was what he’s always been looking forward to, but how could he not feel any reluctance?

Early in the morning, when the first threads of sunlight fell on Ice and Snow City, a grey figure quietly appeared in an alleyway not far from the Pure Wind House. Looking all around, Nian Bing took out a ragged felt hat he had brought from the Mage Association and put it on his head. Along with his coarse, cotton clothes, no one would recognize him other than people he knew.

Checking out his surroundings, Nian Bing decided to go find Feng Nu. Suddenly, he heard a clean and crisp sound. At the same time, strong magic undulations came from around the corner of the alleyway. Prompted by his curiosity, Nian Bing headed to the

corner. Immediately, he saw a strange scene.

There was a little girl who seemed to be fourteen, fifteen years of age. She was not tall. She would only reach up to Nian Bing's chest. Her figure was adorably exquisite, and although the clothes she was wearing were damaged, they looked to be have been made from beautiful cloth. Her black hair was combed into two, long, fat pigtails. Her back was to Nian Bing as she muttered some words.

"I whose name is Xi Yun, summon you. Come out, my pet, Dan Dan." She pointed the pitch-black, delicate magic wand in her hands and immediately, a red hexagram appeared on the ground. The hexagram did not glow too brightly. Even though it was red, strangely there was no feeling of scorching heat. The magic element in the air seemed to repelled into the surroundings.

Right when Nian Bing was puzzled about what she was doing, a dark red light suddenly expanded. The sight made Nian Bing so surprised he cried out. In the dark red hexagram, a massive figure was appearing. With a "moo," the figure gradually became clearer. It's fur was a mottled black and white. It was actually a cow.

The dark red hexagram disappeared and the milk cow rubbed against the girl affectionately. The milk cow was not tall but it was extremely plump. With the slightest movement, all of it's fat jiggled.

"Such a good cow cow. I'm really hungry and I don't want to walk anymore. Squeeze out some milk for me to drink, okay? I'm going to starve to death." The little girl patted the cow's head and spoke in a begging tone.

The cow bellowed in dissatisfaction. It seemed to not want to contribute its milk.

Nian Bing's heart was overcome with nervousness. What had he just seen? Although it was a cow that was summoned, this obviously was a special magic that was just as legendary as his own Ice and Fire Source-summoning magic! Could it be that this little girl was a summoning mage? Heavens! Summoners really did exist.

Chapter 33.1 – Summoner Mage Mao Mao

Nian Bing had read in the Mage Association's collection that summoning magic was known as the continent's most mysterious magic; it was even more cryptic than dark magic. Very few people could meet the strange requirements to cultivate summoning magic. The basic requirement was to be an innate null person. A null person is someone born with a body that does not have a specific attribute. Dual elements, admittedly, were rare, but there were around two for every thousand people. But for null people, who don't have any attributes, their chances were about one in ten thousand.

According to the records, when people from thousands of years ago attained higher levels of magic than they did now, mages were the highest ranking profession. Humans would cultivate a particular magic according to their body's attribute. A null person at that time would be scorned as a piece of trash. At that time, there were extremely few null people. There was a man who chose to kill himself because he could not bear the pressure from the outside world; but when he was in the process of committing suicide, he discovered something strange. No one knew what exactly had happened, but several years later, the first summoning mage appeared on the continent.

Although null people couldn't cultivate a system of magic because they had no attribute, they possessed an inherently high amount of spiritual power. Summoning magic utilized spiritual power to summon any kind of beast that they've established a contract with. These creatures, from the small birds and beasts to the large dragons, could become the companion of a summoner. The stronger the spiritual power, the stronger the creature that can be summoned. These contracted beasts could be used to battle

for the summoner. But while a high spiritual power was essential to become a summoner, luck was also extremely important. Because of these strict requirements, if one couldn't become a summoning mage with their talent, they wouldn't even be able to cultivate martial arts. Additionally, how could making contracts with strong creatures be easy? In order to become a stronger summoning mage, these null people had to develop a special magic suited for them. That magic relied on their strong spiritual power cultivation. For ordinary people, this was almost impossible. For them, however, it was not difficult.

At an unknown time, the legendary summoning mages had disappeared from the world stage because of the dwindling number of null people. According to legend, the strongest summoning mage was a dragon summoner, but he had also fallen in the end. Nian Bing did not think that he would encounter a summoning mage before he had even left Ice and Snow City. Although she had only summoned a milk cow, the fact that she summoned anything was indisputable. Nian Bing's spiritual power couldn't help but pulse fiercely with this revelation.

“Moo.” The cow raised its head in alarm and looked in Nian Bing's direction. The girl followed the cow's gaze to him. At this moment, Nian Bing clearly saw her appearance. Her skin was as fair as sheep-fat white jade. In her pretty face, her large eyes were black as her hair. Those innately large eyes that made people want to protect her blinked as her exquisite red lips pressed together in surprise. “Who's there?”

Nian Bing came out of the shadows and said with embarrassment, “Hello, little sister.”

The girl stuck out her tongue. “Gross, you’re not allowed to call me little sister. I will be sixteen in the eleventh month. What are you doing here? Could it be that you were trying to follow me? No wonder Daddy said that the people from the outside world were all bad. Why are you following me?”

Nian Bing hastily shook his head. “No, you are mistaken. I am not following you. I was coincidentally passing here when I felt magic undulations and went to take a look. Little sis, no, young miss, are you a summoner?”

The girl was blank and then said, “You saw me? Daddy said that whoever knows about us must die.”

Nian Bing was frightened. He said, “What? Why is that?”

The girl shook her head and giggled. “However, you don’t need to be scared. Even if I wanted to kill you, it wouldn’t be so easy since I don’t have an attack type pet. Big Brother, do you have anything good to eat? I’m hungry.”

Nian Bing could not help but shake his head and say, “I left very hurriedly. I didn’t bring anything to eat with me. But I can buy you something. Doesn’t that street have a lot of shops to buy food from? Why didn’t you buy anything?”

The girl pursed her lips and said, “I-I secretly ran off and didn’t bring any money with me. I always just drank Dan Dan’s milk so I wouldn’t be hungry. Big Brother, can you buy something for me to eat? I will trade Dan Dan’s milk with you.”

Nian Bing looked at the fleshy cow and said, “It’s called Dan Dan.”

The girl’s eyes suddenly flashed with a strange light. “Dan Dan, why don’t you greet this big brother?”

Dan Dan mooed. She suddenly raised her two hooves, tilting her fleshy body upwards. Nian Bing clearly saw the red, succulent, fleshy bits of a milk cow. It seemed that it had quite a bit of milk. But right at that moment, a strange thing suddenly occurred. The cow called Dan Dan’s eight tits suddenly simultaneously shot out a milky white light towards Nian Bing.

Nian Bing was not a warrior. Even if his response was quick, he could not dodge in the narrow alleyway. At that moment, the trigger magic scroll showed its merits. With a flash of blue light, a thick ice wall suddenly appeared in front of Nian Bing. It was an ice wall close to one meter in thickness, but under the attack of the white light, eight deep pits suddenly appeared. Nian Bing did not know whether to laugh or cry when he discovered that the white light really did shoot out from the cow’s eight fleshy bits. He didn’t doubt in the slightest, that if he hadn’t put up any protection, those eight streams of milk would have easily pierced through his body.

His right hand waved slightly, and the Flame God’s Stone appeared from the space ring. Nian Bing carefully chanted a spell and watched the girl in front of him warily.

The girl looked at Nian Bing, who had blocked the cow's attack, and couldn't help but be surprised. "You are also a mage?"

Nian Bing nodded his head and said, "Of course. If not, how could I have ever felt your magic undulations?"

The girl curled her lip and said, "Then there's no way around it. I have to kill you, or I won't be allowed to go out anymore if Daddy finds out that I've leaked the secret of my magic. Sorry, Big Brother." Her pretty face smiled sunnily, making it hard for Nian Bing to connect the word murder to this girl, but he did not dare to be the slightest bit careless. The girl before him who could use summoning magic could not be simple.

Subconsciously taking a step back, the cow called Dan Dan had already (exasperatingly) slowly moved in front of the girl. The cow's eyes were looking at Nian Bing and seemed full of disdain. With a moo, it raised up on its two hooves and shot out another eight streams of milk at Nian Bing. This time however, it was much more rushed.

Nian Bing gripped the Flame God's Stone in his right hand and slowly extended it outwards. A ball of purple flame suddenly condensed into a fire shield right in front of him. This was the rank 4 spell, Purple Flame Shield. This was the magic he had prepped beforehand. It worked by creating extremely high temperatures. It was typically used to defend against ice magic, but at this moment it was also extremely well suited for defending against milk. Although the milk was shooting forwards very strongly, it didn't even come into contact with the Purple Fire Shield before it immediately evaporated into milk powder. In a

moment, the air was saturated with the scent of Dan Dan's milk. The Purple Fire Shield, besides letting out some streams of scorching hot air, was completely unaffected.

Relying on his superior magic control, which was a lot stronger than other mages of the same rank, Nian Bing used his right hand to control the Purple Fire Shield to move forward a step. He looked at the fleshy cow. "You don't have any other skills besides squirting out milk? I really do not know how you could exist as a magic beast. What would you do if your milk was squeezed dry?" Although the cow in front of him did not look any different from an ordinary cow, its attack showed that it was still a magic beast. The only thing was that its sole ability was rather puny.

The cow looked at the Purple Flame Shield in front of Nian Bing and was evidently frightened. It turned its head to look at its owner, bellowing several times.

The girl poked her head out from the cow's back. She looked at Nian Bing in surprise. "Big Brother, you still haven't died! Before it was ice, and now it was fire. I have never heard father talk about that kind of mage!"

Nian Bing's heart jumped in surprise. He realized that he had unintentionally revealed his secret. He said coolly, "That wall from before was a magic scroll. This shield is my magic. Young lady, if you don't want your cow to turn into beef jerky, tell it to get out of the way."

The girl seemed to respond with difficulty. "But, my cow can kill

people! If I send it back to my space, then how can I kill you?” Her appearance was exceedingly adorable, without any trace of deceit.

Nian Bing laughed and said, “Have you never killed anyone?”

The girl shook her head and said, “No, but Daddy kept talking about killing people over and over again. Mama said that he was being noisy. He was being super boring so I ran out to play.”

Nian Bing looked at the girl who did not understand worldly affairs. An affectionate feeling suddenly surged up in his heart. It was not the feeling a man had for a woman, but the concern an older brother had for his little sister. “So it was like that. Put this cow back into your space, and I can get you some good food to eat, okay?”

The girl tilted her head in thought and then said, “Okay! After I finish eating, I can kill you. Daddy is very fierce, so I don’t have any other way. Don’t blame me Big Brother.”

Nian Bing dissolved the Purple Flame Shield with a wave his hand. “Come with me.” Saying this, he firmly pressed his hat to his head and walked out of the alley. He had quite a few trigger scrolls on him, so he was not worried even if the girl tried a sneak attack.

The girl happily cheered. She clasped her hands together in front of her chest and murmured a chant. “Dan Dan, return.” The massive cow disappeared with a flash of red light, although a low moo remained as the girl walked forward.

The girl walked behind Nian Bing. The two people, one in front and one behind, arrived on the main street. Nian Bing lowered his head and listened to the girl's footsteps, slowly heading to the north of the city. If he didn't have to leave Ice and Snow City, he would've brought this girl to the Pure Wind House for a big meal. Right now however, there was no way to do so. By staying on this street, he would not have to fear running out of time.

After walking for about an hour, the girl finally could not endure the silence. She quickly ran up to Nian Bing's side. "Big Brother, my stomach and feet really hurt. I can't walk anymore. When will we get to eat the yummy food?"

Nian Bing turned his head to look at the girl who was a head shorter than him. He said, "Don't be impatient; we will get there soon. Then Big Brother will personally make you delicious food to eat." He didn't know why, but seeing the pure and innocent black eyes of the girl, Nian Bing's heart unconsciously swelled with pity.

The girl blinked her eyes and said, "Big brother, carry me on your back. I really can't move anymore."

Nian Bing was blank for a moment. He was not even older than this girl by three years. Hearing that she wanted to get on his back, he couldn't help but turn red. He said, "No can do. Men and women are different."

The girl pouted and said, "You liar. Daddy has carried me on his back to places to play."

Nian Bing smiled bitterly and said, “That is not the same. He is your dad!”

The little girl said, “If you don’t carry me, I will just find a place without people and summon Dan Dan so I can ride her.”

Nian Bing immediately shook his head and said, “You can’t do that either. Riding a cow through the main street will attract too much attention.” Right now, his goal was to quietly leave Ice and Snow City. He honestly didn’t know why he bothered with this inconvenience.

The girl stuck out both of her arms. Her snow white hands were as tender as bamboo shoots. “Then you carry me.”

With a sigh, Nian Bing had no choice but to kneel on the ground. Anyway, she was still a young lady. The girl leaped up with a cheer and clambered onto Nian Bing’s broad back. Although he did not cultivate martial arts, Nian Bing’s build was very robust from a normal person’s point of view. The girl was also very light, so it wasn’t that tiring to carry her. As such, he carried the girl through the winding streets until he finally arrived at his target destination.

After the time it took to eat a meal, Nian Bing breathed heavily as the girl came down from his back. His forehead and temples were dripping with sweat. “Get off, you little imp. We’ve arrived.”

“Shui Huo Metal Shop. Big Brother, there are good things to eat here?” The girl asked curiously.

Nian Bing did not answer, but instead walked in front of the gates and knocked on the door.

“Who is it!?” A familiar voice called out softly. Nian Bing suddenly felt that his heart had warmed. He didn’t know why, but Feng Nu’s appearance was always deeply imprinted in his mind.

“Feng Nu, it’s me, Nian Bing.”

Chapter 33.2 – Summoner Mage Mao Mao

Feng Nu, who was wearing white pants, poked her head out from the open door. Her facial expression became cold upon seeing Nian Bing. “So the great Magic Chef of Ice and Fire has graced us with his presence. We are ble shop, do you not feel wronged by coming here?”

Nian Bing looked at Feng Nu. She seemed even prettier than before, giving off a thicker noble air than the last time they had met. “Feng Nu, you, I...” In that moment, he did not know what to say.

“Big Sister, I’m really hungry.” The little girl poked her head out from Nian Bing’s back. Her pair of big eyes gazed at Feng Nu with a curious look.

Feng Nu looked at the cute girl and couldn’t help but shoot a surprised glance at Nian Bing. “She is?”

Nian Bing smiled bitterly and said, “I picked her up on the street. According to what she said, she left home without any money.”

Feng Nu looked at Nian Bing with suspicion. Her expression showed her displeasure. She opened the door for them and said, “You should come in first.”

“I have yummy things to eat.” The girl cheered and was the first to enter. As Nian Bing drew up alongside Feng Nu, he clearly heard her say in a low voice, “If I find out that you’ve kidnapped that

underage girl, there's no need to doubt that I will be unpleasant to you."

Nian Bing wore an innocent expression as he replied, "Do you really think that I am that kind of person?"

Feng Nu snorted and said, "You can know someone for a long time without knowing their heart. Who knows what kind of hobbies you have." After saying this, she couldn't help but smile. She tugged Nian Bing into the courtyard. The sight of her beautiful eyes rippling with feeling was indescribably moving.

"Big sister, what do you have here that's good to eat! I'm really hungry." The girl ran up to Feng Nu, tugging on her arm without a care in the world.

Feng Nu said tenderly, "Little Sister, what is your name? Why did you disobediently leave home? Your family must be worried."

Nian Bing nodded his head, saying, "That's right, you are really too naughty. I also don't know your name. That's right, why can't I call you little sister, but she can?"

The girl blinked her eyes and said, "Because Big Sister is more beautiful than you! My name is Xi Yun. I am actually very well-behaved, like an adorable kitten. So Dad and Mama like to call me [Mao Mao](#). You can also call me that."

Mao or 猫 means cat in Chinese

Feng Nu leveled Nian Bing a look and said, “Mao Mao, don’t mind him. Nian Bing, go and cook food. There are some ingredients you can use in the kitchen. Hmph, unfortunately for you, I’ve been throwing away quite a bit of stuff these days. I wanted to see when you would be coming here.”

Nian Bing went blank for a moment then said, “Didn’t I tell you that I couldn’t come for some time?”

Feng Nu replied ill-temperedly. “Quickly go and make food. We’ll settle our accounts in a moment. Little Sister, sit down and rest for a moment.” While saying this, she pulled out a stool for Mao Mao to sit on.

Nian Bing couldn’t help but shake his head and just walked into the kitchen. Right now, besides the “deceased” Zha Ji, the only one who could use such a commanding tone and leave him willing to make food was Feng Nu.

The kitchen did not have many ingredients, only a few kinds of green vegetables. In Nian Bing’s attentive hands, it was an hour before the delicious scent of Four Vegetable Soup wafted to the table in the courtyard.

“Wow, what a good smell! Big Brother, why is the rice green?” Mao Mao looked at the savory rice in front of her as she asked.

Nian Bing smiled and said, “Because Big Brother used the juices from the cooked vegetables to make it. The nutrition from the vegetables mixed completely with the rice as it steamed. Not only

is the flavor quite fresh, it is also very nutritious. Eat a lot. It's a pity that there's only vegetables. If you want, you can contribute your fat cow and I can make you beef balls?

Mao Mao was obviously frightened by Nian Bing. "I don't want! You can't eat cow. Cow cow needs to squeeze out milk for Mao Mao to drink."

Feng Nu looked at them in suspicion. She asked, "Cow, where is this cow?"

Mao Mao looked at Nian Bing with big eyes. "You're not allowed to say it. Big Sister, Mao Mao is not allowed to tell you or else you will have to die."

Hearing her say something like this, Feng Nu's suspicion intensified. "They why does Nian Bing know?"

Mao Mao, while shovelling the rice and veggies, said intelligibly, "Because I'm waiting till after I finish eating to kill Big Brother who knows my secret!"

Feng Nu looked at Nian Bing in surprise. "She wants to kill you?"

Nian Bing shrugged his shoulders and said, "She is very naive. Who let me know her secret? It's okay to let her kill me. Anyways, after she has finished eating, I will leave her. It's likely that I will never see her again."

Feng Nu's expression changed slightly and she said, "You're leaving?"

Nian Bing nodded his head and said, "I need to leave. You know about the Magic Chef of Ice and Fire. I received news that the king of the Ice and Moon Empire has sent out an order for me to enter the palace. If I don't leave, I won't have any freedom. Feng Nu, is the True Sun Knife ready?"

Feng Nu's eyes flashed with a strange light. After a long while, she nodded and said, "It has been ready for the past few days. You should leave soon. Perhaps after you leave, I will also leave here."

Nian Bing asked in surprise, "You're leaving too?"

Feng Nu gave Nian Bing a strange look. She said, "I had already planned on leaving when you had come before. There is nothing here that would make me willing to stay. But because of your arrival I had to stay here for several months. When I'm done eating I will go bring out the stove. After the True Sun Knife is completed, I will leave here."

Nian Bing's heart felt tight. "Then will we see each other again? Where do you plan to go from here?"

Feng Nu lowered her head, making Nian Bing unable to see the red light flashing in her eyes. Mao Mao raised her head to look at Feng Nu, her large black eyes holding a hint of surprise. Feng Nu said, "I will probably go to the Clear Wood Empire. There are some things I need to find there. If fate is willing, we will see each other

again.”

Nian Bing believed that Feng Nu undoubtedly wanted to find ores used for forging. Regretfully, he said, “It’s too bad I promised a friend to first go to the Profound Orchid Empire. If not, we could’ve travelled together.”

The meal progressed in silence. The most cheerful one was Mao Mao. Although they were just vegetables, their exquisite flavor was brought out in Nian Bing’s hands. This simple dish really showcased his consummate culinary skills. Mao Mao consumed a quantity of food disproportionate to her body size, with the majority of the food entering her stomach. Feng Nu, who usually had a big appetite, did not eat much. During this time, her eyes held a hint of hesitation as she occasionally glanced at Nian Bing. There seemed to be something she couldn’t decide on.

After the meal had been cleared out, Feng Nu moved to clean up but was stopped Nian Bing. “I haven’t seen you for many days. I will clean up.” Having said this, he very quickly gathered up the bowls and chopsticks and walked to the kitchen.

Nian Bing had just walked away when Mao Mao impatiently tugged Feng Nu’s hand. In a low voice, she said, “Big Sister, Big Sister, aren’t you from the Phoenix Clan?”

Hearing this sentence, Feng Nu’s whole body shook. A scorching stream of air automatically streamed out. Grabbing Mao Mao’s hand, she said, “How do you know this? Who are you?”

Mao Mao spoke in a pained tone. “Big Sister, you’re hurting Mao Mao. You have the aura of a phoenix on you! So that’s how Mao Mao knew. Daddy took me to visit your Phoenix Clan before.”

A name flashed through Feng Nu’s mind. In a low voice, she asked, “You are Dragon Summoner Mage Xi La De’s daughter?”

Mao Mao said, “Yeah! Yeah! Big Sister, you know my dad?”

Feng Nu’s eyes shone. Her facial expression had become soft once more. “I know him. Of course, I know him. The greatest genius summoner mage of the blank people, Xi La De. How could I not recognize him? You guys should’ve been at Phoenix Clan ten years ago. Your father had helped us with an important matter. He is definitely an unbelievable genius to be able to reach such heights with his summoning magic cultivation. It’s just a pity that his summoning magic leans towards darkness. However, seeing you, it seems that it hasn’t had any effect on him. Mao Mao, when you said you wanted to kill Nian Bing, is it because he found out about your summoning magic?”

Mao Mao nodded and said, “That’s exactly why! Daddy told me before that if an outsider finds out about my summoning magic, I need to kill him. If not, our clan will be attacked by bad people. Big Sister, because he is a mage it will be very difficult to kill him. Can you help me? Daddy often said that the Phoenix Clan are natural warriors. You can definitely kill him.”

Feng Nu smiled lightly and said, “Good Mao Mao, listen to Big Sister’s words. Do not kill him. He is a good person and won’t leak out your secret. If your father asks, you can tell him a daughter of a

phoenix vouches for him. Then your father won't blame you, okay?"

Mao Mao nodded her head and giggled. "Okay! Mao Mao doesn't want to kill people anyway. Big Sister, thank you. It's good that I don't have to kill anyone. Big Brother Nian Bing also makes really delicious food, so I'm not that eager to kill him."

Feng Nu said with some bad humor. "You silly girl, you ran away from home only partly learning summoning magic. If you wanted to kill him, you would need to study for at least five more years with your dad. He is not that simple. His Ice and Fire Magic Source is just as mysterious as your family's summoning magic. Mao Mao, you need to remember, that you must never ever leak Big Sister's identity to him.

Mao Mao blinked her eyes and said, "Big Sister, you don't need to worry. Mao Mao is the most the most obedient. She won't say anything."

Obedient? An obedient kid who left home? "Mao Mao, wait for me to help Big Brother Nian Bing with something, then I will send you home. If you go off by yourself, your dad and mom will definitely be extremely worried."

Mao Mao pouted. "I don't want to; it's so boring at home. Every day, Daddy makes me stare into a crystal ball and says it will raise my spirit power. It's too boring, not fun at all. It's not easy for me to run out. Mao Mao just wanted to spend more days playing."

Feng Nu's brow wrinkled. "But your parents will worry! Don't tell me you want them to worry? Mao Mao, listen well. I will make you go home." Because of the relationship between the Phoenix Clan and Mao Mao's father, Feng Nu would definitely help her.

Mao Mao lowered her head and said, "Fine, I will go back with Big Sister."

Right at this moment, Nian Bing finished putting things away. He came out of the kitchen and said while smiling, "I made quite a bit of food today but I didn't think that it would all be eaten. You shouldn't be called Mao Mao, but [Zhu Zhu](#) instead."

Zhu means pig in Chinese

Mao Mao's eyes suddenly twinkled. "That's right, Big Sister, is there anything else to eat here? Mao Mao's pets haven't eaten anything; they are definitely hungry. Dan Dan the cow is the best; he's fine with eating grass. The others are not obedient. They are very picky with what they eat."

Nian Bing said in surprise, "Mao Mao, why did you talk about your..."

Mao Mao smiled and said, "Because Big Sister is a good person! I already told Big Sister."

Nian Bing looked at Feng Nu strangely. He really did not understand how Feng Nu had bribed Mao Mao in that period of time. It seemed that his charm was far below Feng Nu's. "Mao Mao, do your pets want to eat something?"

Mao Mao said, "Of course they do. They usually stay in my space, but they need to eat every once in awhile. I haven't had anything for them to eat this entire time. I could only let them drink Dan Dan's milk. Since I've left home, they haven't eaten till they were full."

Feng Nu smiled and said, "Then call them out. Big Sister does not have any meat here, but I have some grain."

Mao Mao said excitedly, "Okay! Finally, I can let them out for

some fresh air. If they're picky this time with the grain, then they'll just stay hungry. Big Brother, Big Sister, I will let you see my four greatest summoned beasts. I, whose name is Xi Yun, summon you. Come out, my pet. Tian Tian." A red hexagram appeared on the ground. Nian Bing could clearly feel a spiritual power much greater than his own fill the air. In a flash of red light, a creature appeared on the ground. It was actually a fat rat.

The big rat was about half a meter in length. For scale, its body was about as fat as the cow's head. Besides its pointy snout and slender tail, its whole body resembled a gray ball. The moment it appeared, its pointy nose had stopped sniffing around. When its nose pointed at Feng Nu, it suddenly trembled. It scrambled on the ground and did not dare to budge.

Seeing the fat rat, Nian Bing was thinking from a chef's perspective, "If I fried the skin in oil, the flavor wouldn't be too bad. It would be good seasoned with a bit of salt."

Mao Mao said, "This giant rat is the laziest out of all my creatures. It will just sleep then eat, then eat and sleep the whole day. Making it do work is the most difficult thing ever. I, whose name is Xi Yun, summon you. Come out, my pet, Na Na." The red light flashed again. This time a red fox appeared next to the big rat, Tian Tian. It was obviously very delicate and small. It blinked its small but spirited eyes. It combed its luxurious fur, and seemed to smile malevolently. It immediately climbed onto the giant rat's back. Tian Tian squeaked twice in protest, but under the tyrannical abuse of the fox, it could not help but lower its head. The fox looked all around, feeling superior, but suddenly sensed the special aura emanating from Feng Nu's body. Immediately, it used its tail to cover its head like an ostrich.

Chapter 34.1 – The Flame God’s Roar

Mao Mao giggled and said, “Na Na is the craftiest. She likes to bully the other babies, especially Tian Tian. I, whose name is Xi Yun, summon you. Come out my pet, Guan Guan.” A red light flashed in Mao Mao’s hands this time. A little pink pig appeared in her embrace and wiggled its chubby butt. It was the same size as the big rat, Tian Tian, only thirty centimeters long.

Nian Bing looked at the cute pink pig and couldn’t help but exclaim in admiration. “That really is a prime ingredient for roast suckling pig!” After saying this, he was met with indignant gazes. Mao Mao angrily glared at Nian Bing. “Big Brother, what are you saying? You’re not allowed to talk about Guan Guan like that. He is so cute and you...you actually want to eat it?”

Nian Bing said sheepishly, “Sorry Mao Mao. It’s just a habit from my profession.”

Mao Mao harrumphed. She said, “Guan Guan is the cutest. It has always been super cute since it was little.. Occasionally, its big ears would stand erect, like a proper little official. That’s why I called him [Guan Guan](#). Guan Guan, don’t be scared. Big Sister will protect you. There won’t be anyone who can harm you.” The pink piglet had furiously buried his head in Mao Mao’s embrace, exposing its wiggling butt. Hearing Mao Mao’s words, it had seemed to have regained its courage. It poked out its head out from Mao Mao’s embrace and looked around outside. When its beady pig eyes fell on Feng Nu, it was strangely not afraid at all; it seemed to be more interested. Its two little eyes flashed dark red.

Guan is official in Chinese

Feng Nu's eyes held a hint of surprise. "Mao Mao, where did all your pets come from?"

Mao Mao giggled and said, "Of course they were bred by Daddy! However, they haven't reached their final form yet. I'm afraid of walking on the road alone, so I brought them with me. Anyway, they have a contract with me. I, whose name is Xi Yun, summon you. Come out my pet, Dan Dan." As Mao Mao summoned her final beast, the massive cow emerged, instantly dwarfing the other three beasts. With two "moo"s, it appeared next to Mao Mao.

Hearing the sound of the cow, Na Na, the fox who had been perched on top of Tian Tian, the big rat, suddenly raised its head. Its small eyes emitted a sinister light. With a fierce leap, the fire-red figure was immediately suspended from the milk cow's stomach. When looking closely, you could see it suckling on the cow's tit, gulping down its milk.

Mao Mao said in dissatisfaction, "Na Na, you are the naughtiest."

One pig, one cow, one fox, as well as one big rat composed Mao Mao's four greatest summoned beasts. Although they looked like nothing much, Nian Bing could faintly sense that these summoned beasts were not so simple.

Feng Nu hoisted out a sack of rice from the kitchen and scattered the grain on the ground. The large grey rat and Guan Guan the pink piglet almost simultaneously pounced, immovably bound to

the pile of rice.

The milk cow bellowed angrily and tried to shake off the fox. But the fox had grabbed onto its belly tightly. Despite its efforts, it could not prevent its milk from being sucked away into the fox's belly.

Mao Mao comforted the cow. "Dan Dan, behave a little more. There is nothing here for Na Na to eat, so just let her drink your milk. Do you want to eat some rice?"

Dan Dan's huge eyes looked innocent, but Nian Bing knew without a doubt that if the fox was on the ground, the cow would immediately trample the fox to death.

"Nian Bing, we will start." Feng Nu's level voice suddenly pierced Nian Bing's ears. Nian Bing looked at her and she looked right back at him. Melancholy at parting suddenly spread through Nian Bing's chest. He nodded and said, "I will be troubling you."

Feng Nu seemed to float as she arrived at the corner of the wall next to the forging furnace. Dark red Nine Flame Qi set off her pink hair. With a soft yell, that extremely heavy forging furnace was actually hoisted by her into the air. With a leap, she had already arrived at the center of the courtyard and set down the furnace. Looking at Nian Bing she said, "Wait a moment."

In the span of a moment, Feng Nu had added some materials into the forging furnace. They were obviously for combustion. Just as Feng Nu did not understand cooking, Nian Bing was also

completely clueless when it came to forging. He could only stand to the side and watch.

Mao Mao was playing with her pets at the side. That big rat, Tian Tian, could really eat. Eight-tenths of the sack of rice had entered its body, while the little pink pig had only eaten a little. But since it had started eating, it had not raised its head.

A red light flashed, and a familiar aura attracted Nian Bing's attention. He did not know when the True Sun Knife had been put into the forging furnace. A pattern in the shape of the Flame God's Stone had already been carved into the handle of the True Sun Knife. The edges of the carving were rough. It was clear that the fire dragon's horn was exceedingly hard to damage. Feng Nu held the Heavenly Flame Sword in her hands. She nodded her head at Nian Bing and said, "Pump the bellows for me. Remember, your movements must be steady. Now, we will begin."

Feng Nu's whole body let out a scorching aura. Fortunately, Nian Bing was on the other side of the furnace and was not hit by the hot air from her body. An intense, red light appeared around her body. She pointed her finger in front of her and a stream of red light shot into the furnace. The furnace fire exploded, but not with an ordinary red flame. The tongues of fire were white, bathing the entire courtyard in their light. Everything was the same as it was when Hua Tian had forged the Morning Dew Knife. The only difference was that this time, Feng Nu was a lot more relaxed than Hua Tian. It was obvious that her Nine Flame Qi was on a higher level than her mentor.

With a soft grunt, the Heavenly Flame Sword was unsheathed. A

wave of blazing fire ran along the Heavenly Flame Sword and shot at the tail end of the True Sun Knife, with the white flames rising to meet it. When it met with the light from the Heavenly Flame Sword, the white flame immediately turned green.

Without Feng Nu's reminder, Nian Bing immediately started to pump the bellows. The bellows settled into a fixed rhythm in his hands and pushed the now green flame into a steady state. Feng Nu gazed calmly at the True Knife Fire that was amidst the furnace fire. Suddenly she yelled lightly, "Nine Heaven Rebelling Flame." She omitted Hua Tian's process of drawing up the blood.

Nian Bing used one hand to pump the bellows and the other to take out the Flame God's Stone from his space. The originally red Nine Flames Qi turned dark green in an instant. Light flashed as the Flame God's Stone was tossed to Feng Nu.

Feng Nu's sky blue eyes suddenly sparkled like a prism. In a moment, the deep green qi had turned crimson. When the Flame God's Stone came into contact with the qi on her body, it seemed to become a part of her body. A dazzling, faint blue flame flashed as an incomparably massive amount of fire element surged outwards and poured into the furnace.

Even if Nian Bing had the ability of a fire mage and had been together with the Flame God's Stone for many years, he could not withstand the heat of this flame. A low-ranked blue ice shield shielded his body. He immediately let go of the bellows and stepped back a few steps.

Mao Mao also made a move at this time. She waved her two

hands and chanted something in a low voice. Her four precious summoned beasts disappeared one after another in the midst of the red light. Evidently, she was afraid that the blazing flame would harm her summoned beasts.

“Fuse.” Feng Nu’s charming voice yelled out. The flame-shaped Flame God’s Stone followed along the three foot seven inch Heavenly Flame Sword, accurately inlaying into the cavity on the True Sun Knife. As the Flame God’s Stone and the knife united, the coarse edges shone. The hard dragon’s horn seemed to submit to the light blue flame emitted by the Flame God’s Stone. Wrapped entirely in it, they unified as one. It seemed as if they had always been together.

Feng Nu shot a severe look at Nian Bing. The Heavenly Flame Sword in her hands turned to cut down at Nian Bing. Nian Bing immediately started reciting a spell and held out his right hand. The chant he was saying now was not for defense, but to restrict the trigger magic scrolls in his chest from activating.

The sword flashed and blood flew out. Not a single drop was wasted as the Nine Flames Qi swept up the blood and deposited it into the knife handle of the True Sun Knife. The entire True Sun Knife turned crimson as scorching air shot into the sky. The red light from the knife was like the deep red sun rising into the sky. It let out an intense roar. The knife seemed to be chanting. Nian Bing stood in his place, unmoving. His gaze was firmly locked onto the True Sun Knife. From the broad knife body, he seemed to see Zha Ji’s figure.

Feng Nu had subconsciously taken a few steps back at the deep

roar. Murmuring to herself, she said, “What a great fire element. It’s just a pity that it has already acknowledged a master. If it were not the Flame God’s Stone, but some other ordinary treasure, it definitely would not be able to inlayed in materials such as the fire dragon’s horn. I really did not think that I would be able to give birth to a god-grade blade so quickly.”

Nian Bing had forgotten everything else. In his eyes, there was only the brilliant, intense red light of the True Sun Knife. Step by step, he headed to the furnace. The roar of the True Sun Knife seemed to be beckoning to his heart. It appeared that Nian Bing did not feel the scorching air streams around the furnace. He extended his hand into the blaze and directly grabbed the True Sun Knife out.

The roaring noise suddenly became even more intense as Nian Bing grabbed the handle of the True Sun Knife, and a dark red light shot into the sky. Nian Bing’s inner fire element suddenly bloomed out. Body and knife unified as one. A quiet bell rang, and the Morning Dew Knife that had been in the space ring sprung out without any warning. The seal array on the outside of the knife had been broken by a green-blue light. An icy aura pushed the scorching aura of the TrueSun Knife to the right.

Nian Bing reached out with his left hand and grabbed the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Sigh. The scabbard responded by flinging to the side. Two massive balls of ice and fire energy continuously interweaved within him. The rotating Ice and Fire vortex inside of him reached incomparable speeds and widened greatly. Nian Bing’s skin alternated between blue and red, incessantly interchanging between those two colors. All of the ice element and fire element in the air were like moths drawn to a light as they

rushed at him. The blue Morning Dew and the red True Sun formed a distinct contrast.

With a kala sound, Nian Bing's clothes could not endure the extreme magic power and tore. To Feng Nu's and Mao Mao's shock, Nian Bing's body was exposed to the air. Shining with a red and blue light, every inch of his skin looked extremely dangerous.

At this moment, Feng Nu and Mao Mao had already turned around. Feng Nu was afraid the aura coming from Nian Bing's body would harm Mao Mao. Gathering the younger girl into her arms, she pointed her foot at the ground and a thick layer of Nine Flames Qi protected Mao Mao.

“Big Sisters, what's up with Big Brother Nian Bing? Why did he take off his clothes?” Mao Mao's red face asked in a low tone.

Feng Nu's face was just as red, but with the color of the Nine Flames Qi, the blush on her face was not as obvious. She coughed and said, “Don't worry, your Big Brother Nian Bing is fine. He is a mage, and the gems on those two knives are top-quality magic stones. The True Sun Knife was just inlaid within the Flame God's Stone, bestowing a soul for the knife. Naturally, a huge amount of energy would be emitted. It called the ice knife, which intensified the magic element and destroyed his clothing. In a moment, the knife energy will stabilize and everything will be fine. He should have gained quite a bit this time around.

While Feng Nu spoke of this opportunity, Nian Bing's absorption speed had increased to ten times the norm, and was turning the magic element in the air into his own magic power. Drop by drop

his magic power grew, continuously making him become stronger. At the same time, it brought the risk of his Ice and Fire Source's mutual collapse closer.

.....

Ice God's Pagoda.

The Ice and Snow Goddess' Worshipper who was meditating suddenly opened her eyes. "It has appeared. This time I can feel the existence of an energy that I hate. Could it be that someone from the Harmonic Flower Empire has it? Ice and Snow Goddess' Stone, I will always find you."

Blue light flashed and without any warning, the Ice and Snow Goddess' worshipper disappeared from her cross-legged position in a blue hexagram.

.....

The red and blue light had finally dissipated. Nian Bing awoke from his strange stupor. His internal Ice and Fire Source whirlpool had obviously started to spin faster than before. The color had deepened and he could obviously feel that his magic power was stronger. It was good that it was still spinning, and inwardly, he let out a sigh of relief. Looking at the True Sun Knife in his hands that was surging with powerful fire, he couldn't help but exclaim in admiration, "Such a great Flame God's Roar. Your ability is definitely not any less than Morning Dew!"

With a cough, Feng Nu said, “Nian Bing, shouldn’t you first find something to cover your body with?”

Nian Bing blanched and then discovered that all the clothes on his body had disappeared. His glossy skin had been completely exposed to the air. With his whole head on fire and his face entirely red, he immediately summoned out a pair of plain clothes and flusteredly put them on.

Chapter 34.2 – The Flame God’s Roar

Embarrassment. Embarrassment that was hard to conceal. The thought of the two girls looking at his naked body made Nian Bing hate that he was unable to bang his head until he died. He forced out a cough and said, “So-sorry, just now, uh.....”

Feng Nu turned around and snuck a glance. Seeing that Nian Bing had put clothes on, she tugged Mao Mao around. “It’s fine; there is no need to explain to us. I have already finished what your request. I do not want any sort of remuneration; just remember that you owe me one. Let me give you some advice. Since you seem to have some sort of storage-type magic item on you, these two knives don’t need scabbards. Why would those precious knives need to conceal their sharpness?”

Nian Bing lowered his head to think, immediately grasping Feng Nu’s meaning. When mages faced off against martial artists, being able to quickly use magic determined victory or defeat. Whether or not the knife was unsheathed affected the ability to use the wand-like treasured knives to simultaneously imbue magic in the blade and better absorb magic element. Seeing the scabbard that was tossed to the side, he nodded and said, “What you said is correct. Feng Nu, I need to leave here immediately. The sharpness of the Morning Dew Knife has been exposed, and I’m afraid that there will be people coming to find me soon. Although we cannot be travelling companions, we can still leave together. You should go and pack up your things.”

Feng Nu returned the Heavenly Flame Sword to its sheathe and said with a smile, “There’s nothing to pack up. I only need this. The things that Master left will remain here. Perhaps I will return

here one day. Mao Mao, can I bother you to wait for us at the entrance? I have a few things I need to say alone to your Big Brother Nian Bing.”

Mao Mao’s cute face smiled sunnily. “Okay! Big Sister, hurry up, okay? I’ll go out first.” Having said this, she ran off out the courtyard door.

Feng Nu looked at Nian Bing and Nian Bing looked at her. The two of them felt like their hearts were thudding in their chests. Nian Bing opened his mouth first and asked, “So what do you have to say?”

Feng Nu nibbled on her lower lip, and wrapped her voice in qi to send it to Nian Bing’s ear. “If, and I say if, we could stay together, would you be willing to come with me to a place with many things that would interest you? However, once we get there, you would not be able to return to real society.”

Nian Bing faintly felt something. With a sigh, he said, “Feng Nu, did you know that you are the most beautiful girl I have ever seen? Honestly speaking, I really like if you. If it wasn’t because of the things I need to do, I probably would have agreed with your requests. But right now, my life does not only include you; it also includes my deceased master and parents. We’ll be friends forever, right? If fate wills it, then we will definitely meet again. I’m going now, goodbye.” Morning Dew and True Sun were put into his space ring. Nian Bing lowered his head and walked in the direction of the main door. When he reached Feng Nu’s side, a red light suddenly flashed, and the Heavenly Flame Sword was pressed on to Nian Bing’s shoulder. A mountain-sized oppressive force made

him unable to walk another inch.

Feng Nu spoke in a bit of annoyed tone. “Do you know what you just said, you bastard?!”

Nian Bing managed to turn his head to look at Nian Bing and discovered that she was looking at him. Her dark blue eyes held a faint smile. “Feng Nu, if I want to find you afterwards, where should I go?”

Feng Nu asked, “You will look for me?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “We are friends; why wouldn’t I want to look for you?”

Feng Nu said ill-temperedly, “Then you just need to yell out Feng Nu a thousand times, and I’ll know.”

Nian Bing laughed, saying, “I hope that is the case, because I’ll really do it!”

The sword was lifted off of him, and Nian Bing regained his freedom. Feng Nu walked next to him and said in a low voice, “I told Mao Mao to leave first because I wanted to remind you of something. The Ice and Fire Magic Source guarantees your strength, but is a big trouble for you at the same time. In this continent, there aren’t just one or two knowledgeable experts. True martial arts and magic experts have sequestered themselves at hidden locations. I think that those hermits definitely would be

interested in you. You shouldn't linger in one place for too long."

Nian Bing nodded his head and said, "Master warned me of the exact same thing before. Although I couldn't help but stay in Ice Moon City this time, I won't commit the same mistake again. Thank you, Feng Nu. Oh, that's right did you know Mao Mao from before?"

Feng Nu was stunned. She asked, "How did you know?"

Nian Bing smiled slightly and answered, "If not, then how would she, with her identity as a legendary practitioner of summoning magic, expose her secret to you so easily? Actually, I always have sensed that you cannot be so simple. But don't worry, I won't ask you any more questions. Every person has their own secrets. It's good that you know Mao Mao, so I will hand her over to you."

Feng Nu glared at Nian Bing with ill-humor. "Don't tell me that you don't understand. Sometimes, it's not good to be too smart."

Nian Bing shrugged and replied, "Of course I knew that. If it were someone else, I wouldn't say anything even if I saw something. Okay, I really will leave now. Feng Nu, we will meet again some day." Having said this, he spread open his arms and fiercely took Feng Nu's fragrant, pretty body into his grasp. Then, he suddenly let her go and, using a Snowstorm scroll on his person, condensed a snow storm that sent him into the air. He had disappeared in the blink of the eye, leaving only a few small snowflakes behind in the courtyard.

Feng Nu's charming face flushed red as she stared up into the sky. The intense differences between their bodies had excited her pretty body. This was the first time she had let someone of the opposite sex get so close to her. She didn't know why, but she didn't have any averse feelings towards it. Nian Bing had left, and the disappointment and frustration continued to assail her heart as if disappointed at a loss.

"Mao Mao, you can come in. We will go soon." The door opened, and Mao Mao, who heard Feng Nu's call, came in. Her original vivacious self however, had become somewhat dull. Feng Nu had just wanted to go and pick up her few things before leaving when she suddenly felt that something was wrong in her heart. She walked up in front of Mao Mao and suspiciously looked at the latter's wooden appearance. Creasing her brows, she asked, "Mao Mao, are you alright?"

Mao Mao somewhat sluggishly looked at Feng Nu, but didn't say anything. Feng Nu silently said, Not good. When she reached out a hand to touch Mao Mao she hadn't used much force, but her palm easily passed through Mao Mao's body. A red light flashed and Mao Mao's body actually disappeared into thin air. A cockroach the size of a chicken egg appeared on the ground. It looked at Feng Nu in a tizzy, lowered its head, and burrowed into the ground. It had disappeared in the blink of an eye.

Feng Nu was shocked for a moment, but then her pretty face wore a playful and good-tempered expression. "What a sly cat. You've actually dared to fool me. No wonder you promised to listen to me; you were actually going to use a phantom spell." She could tell that the large cockroach just now must've been one of Mao Mao's summoned pets. It had the special ability to transform

into a human figure, while the real Mao Mao had probably run off earlier.

Helplessly shaking her head, Feng Nu did not chase after her. With that strange magic, it wouldn't be difficult for Mao Mao to shake off anyone she wanted. Sighing slightly, she said to herself, "No doubt she's Xi La De's daughter; the pets the Dragon Summoner raised have very special characteristics. Never mind, with Xi La De's ability, it won't be too troublesome for him to find his own daughter. I don't need to force her to do anything. I still have to hurry to the Lang Mu Empire to finish my business. Nian Bing, what you said is true. If we are fated, then we will definitely see each other again."

Not long after Nian Bing had left stealthily, the Ice Moon Empire Royal Family's person arrived at the Ice and Snow City to announce his decree, but they could not find Nian Bing. Although the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association was not important in the empire's eyes, the association's name was still known. The King's emissary could not come to a conclusion and returned unhappily. The owner of the Grand Pavilion, Jin Hao, was not very satisfied with these results. His consolation was that the might of Nian Bing had left. If he appeared at the Pure Wind House again, Jin Hao could use his status as someone who denied the imperial decree and get Marquis Nuo Ya to arrest him.

Following Nian Bing's departure, the Grand Pavilion's livelihood had gradually recovered a bit. Due to Ming Yuan's increase in culinary skills, however, they were still unable to exceed the ability of the Pure Wind House.

Three days after Nian Bing had left, the owner of the Pure Wind House, Xue Ji, was looking for his daughter that afternoon when he found a letter that had been left on the table in her room. The contents of the letter were only a paltry few words: Father, I will go help you find Nian Bing. We cannot let such a good chef go. Don't miss me. Jing Jing.

Following Nian Bing's departure, the waves caused by the Magic Chef of Ice and Fire gradually settled, returning to the original quiet. But Xue Ji's and Jin Hao's battle had not ended. When the Ice and Snow Goddess' Worshipper came for the second time to Ice and Snow City looking for the Ice and Snow Goddess' Stone, the result was the same as her last visit. But this time, the Goddess' Worshipper temper was even worse. She implicated Marquis Nuo Ya and using the Snow Goddess' Worshipper's influence in the Ice Moon Empire, forced him to gradually disappear from the political scene.

Nian Bing did not directly fly out of the city. After all, that would attract people's attention. He used the Snowstorm spell to carefully land in a corner without people near Ice and Snow City's south gate. And with that, he swaggered out of the second biggest city in the Ice Moon Empire.

Walking on the wide main street, Nian Bing's mind could not be said to be free from worry. For him, Ice and Snow City was a giant cage. Although there were many beauties that attracted him, the feeling of being restricted was hard to stomach. Luckily, everything he had wanted to do had been done. The True Sun Knife had the additional epithet of the Flame God's Roar; and while giving advice to Ming Yuan, he had gained more insight into details of cooking. The most valuable thing to him was

acknowledging Long Zhi as his teacher. In the three months time, he had finally filled the gap in his magic theory. Although there were still many things he did not understand, he had at least already memorized them. Comprehension took time. With the knowledge in his mind, the comprehension would come in time. Nian Bing was confident in his intelligence.

The main avenue was lined with large trees that looked to be at least several decades old. The shade of the tree protected travelers from the sun's rays, bringing in bursts of coolness. The fresh air was comfortable and refreshing. Nian Bing walked along the street unhurriedly. While slowly making his way, he thought over the magic knowledge in his mind that he didn't understand.

Just as he was immersing himself in the sea of magic, he suddenly jumped in fright because of a voice. "Big Brother Nian Bing, you're so slow! I've been waiting for you for half a day." This voice was familiar, expectation hidden amidst the excitement in her tone.

Nian Bing, who thought that he had already been freed from all the entrapments of Ice and Snow City, subconsciously turned to a large tree on the road side. With a helpless tone, he said, "Mao Mao, how come you're not with Feng Nu? Why'd you run off to here?" Nian Bing wasn't surprised in his heart. After all, he had only flown for a short while in Ice and Snow City, and his flying speed was not any faster than walking. Mao Mao had simply run in front of him.

Mao Mao's sly and charming smile appeared as she bounced out from behind a tree. "Big Brother Nian Bing, could it be that you

don't want to see me? Daddy always says that Mao Mao is very cute." While saying this, her fair face couldn't help but wear a hurt expression.

Nian Bing's brows wrinkled slightly and said, "Mao Mao, you should answer Big Brother's question first."

Mao Mao lowered her head and said, "Big Sister wanted to send me home, but I don't wanna go back! If I go back, I'm afraid that Daddy won't let me go out again. Big Brother, I don't know anybody; I don't have any money to eat. Let me come with you. Mao Mao will definitely be obedient and listen to what you say."

Nian Bing forced a smile and asked, "We've not even known each other for four hours, why are you so sure of me?"

Mao Mao giggled and answered, "Because Big Sister Feng Nu said you were a good person! Of course, the more important thing is that you can make yummy food to eat. That meal was the best food Mao Mao has ever eaten. If I can go with you, Big Brother, then not only will it be fun, I can also eat yummy food. Mao Mao will cling to you, Big Brother, you can't throw me away."

Nian Bing steadied his heart and put on a cold face. "Why can't I? I'm not very familiar with you. Seeing as we're acquaintances, I will give you some money so you can buy stuff to eat on the road. Now quickly go home. I have many more things to do, how could I bring you along?" While saying this, he fished his money pouch out of his chest. He took out a purple-gold coin from the bag and kept it before giving the rest of it to Mao Mao. He turned to leave. He secretly felt that this Mao Mao would definitely be a giant

trouble to him. Being far away from her was much better.

Mao Mao held the money bag in her hand and looked at Nian Bing's departing figure. Suddenly, she let out a large cry, "Big Brother is not a good person. Big Brother is bullying Mao Mao. Mao Mao is a girl; being alone outside is very pitiable! No food to eat, no clothes to wear, if I meet a bad person Mao Mao will die. Big Brother is bad, Big Brother is bad, Big Brother is so mean to Mao Mao. Wuwuwu....."

Chapter 35.1 – Roasted Fragrant Musk Deer

As he thought to this point, Nian Bing paused his footsteps and asked himself: “Can I leave Mao Mao here by herself? The answer was a definite no.”

Seeing Nian Bing halt, Mao Mao stopped crying and quickly ran to Nian Bing’s side in a few steps. Tugging his arm, she sobbed, “Big brother Nian Bing, you won’t leave Mao Mao alone and not care about me right?” If this sentence was said to him by any other lady that he knew within the city, he would definitely have felt some ambiguity. However, Nian Bing only felt a warm tender protectiveness towards Mao Mao, who was asking him with teary eyes.

He turned around and looked at Mao Mao as she stared at him with an expectant expression. Lightly sighing, Nian Bing stroked her soft and silky black hair and said, “Tell me, where is your home? Big brother will send you home.”

Mao Mao blinked a few times, saying “I....I’ve forgotten. At the time, I was afraid of being discovered by my father. Thus, I chose to leave at night, without regards for direction and terrain. I have long forgotten the way back.”

Nian Bing naturally did not believe her words. “Then can you tell me how long do you intend to play outside before you return home? Can it be that you don’t miss your father and mother?”

Sticking her tongue out, Mao Mao said “Of course I think of

them! But the moment I go back, I will not be able to play anymore. In that case, I will go back after I have played to my heart's content. Big brother, just bring me along will you? I will be very obedient, and even help you massage your back. I can even summon Cow Cow to help you carry your things!"

Faced with Mao Mao, Nian Bing was rendered speechless. "Let's go, your father will definitely come looking for you. Remember your promise; you are not to find trouble for me on our travels. You also have to listen to me. In return, I promise to keep making delicious food for you to eat. " With that, Nian Bing extended his hand towards Mao Mao.

Smiling, Mao Mao smacked Nian Bing's palm. Not even a trace of the sorrowful expression from before remained. In reality, Nian Bing had still underestimated her. As the daughter of the one and only Dragon Summoner Mage on the continent, how could she not have any abilities for self protection?

Mao Mao summoned her pet cow and climbed atop it. As they were now on the road with much fewer people than the city, riding a cow as a steed would not garner much attention. As they moved along, Nian Bing turned to Mao Mao and asked, "How did you run from Feng Nu's place? I remember seeing you there even as I left!"

Smiling mischievously, Mao Mao said "Of course I have my methods. You will know of it eventually. Big brother, you are a Magus, but why are you not wearing the Mage's robes? Those clothes do not suit you at all."

"It is better for a person to stay humble and remain low key."

Nian Bing explained. “Coarse clothes like these are the most comfortable. Mao Mao, your clothes seem to not have been changed for some time. Later, when we’ve found a place to rest, I will go and buy some new clothes for you. By the way, return my money pouch to me.”

Mao Mao pushed his hands away, suddenly looking innocent. “Money pouch? What money pouch? Did I take your money pouch?”

The Nian Bing who was able to charm countless ladies in Ice Snow City, found himself completely powerless against the little girl in front of him. “Take it that I didn’t say anything.” he sighed. Declining to speak further, Nian Bing strode ahead with big steps.

Although Mao Mao’s cow looked quite fat, it was surprisingly quick and showed no signs of exhaustion even when following Nian Bing’s pace. Nian Bing was no longer paying attention to Mao Mao, but she was still playing happily by herself. Whenever the road became clear of travellers, she would summon each of her pets to play with in turns. However, whenever the fox Na Na was summoned, the cow would immediately stop moving, and stare at it with a furious look in its eyes. Mao Mao had no choice but to summon only the mouse and the pig to play.

In order to not become frustrated, Nian Bing controlled himself and did not speak to Mao Mao. Mao Mao was also very self conscious. Whenever any other travellers appeared on the road, she would immediately send the pets in her bosom back to their space, avoiding any possible troubles.

Nian Bing's journey had neither a final destination nor specific places he wanted to visit. Apart from representing Ice Moon Empire's Magus Association in the competition in Harmonic Flower Empire's capital in ten months time, he did not have anything he had to do. Thus, their travel was set to be in the direction of the Harmonic Flower Empire, which was South of Ice Moon Empire. There, he could also complete Luo Rou's request. Nian Bing had his own thoughts as well. Years ago when he first went to Ice Snow City with his master Zha Ji, he had met a beautiful noblewoman who had gifted him the Heavenly Flower Tile. From certain angles, this noblewoman can be considered a life saving benefactor of his. If there was an opportunity, Nian Bing intend to look for the noblewoman and thank her with his culinary skills.

Nian Bing suddenly realised that there was a big problem. He had been in too much of a rush when he left Ice Snow City and had even neglected to buy a map of the continent! Now, it was like they were groping about in the dark, and can only rely on luck whilst moving southeast. There was no way to tell how far they were from the Harmonic Flower Empire.

"Big brother, I'm hungry!" Mao Mao finally could not endure anymore.

Nian Bing turned back and looked at Mao Mao, who had a pitiful look on her face, and then at his surroundings. "There are neither villages nor shops in this desolate place. Where will I go to obtain food for you? We had lunch only slightly more than 2 hours ago. I seem to recall you ate quite a big portion as well!"

Sticking out her tongue, Mao Mao pouted, “This girl here is still undergoing puberty! Naturally, I need to eat more. Big brother, I’m hungry!”

Looking at this cute little girl, apart from helplessness, there was only helplessness still in Nian Bing’s mind. “Alright, let’s take a break by the side of the road for now. I did not bring any food with me. If you want to eat, I certainly don’t mind turning this nice cow into a gourmet dish. Of course, that mouse and pig will do just fine. Heh Heh.”

Seeing the chilly smile on Nian Bing’s face, a look of vigilance flashed across Mao Mao’s eyes. “Big brother is a bully! Always thinking of other people’s precious pets. They can’t be eaten!” Right at this moment, she seemed to have detected something, her black eyes lighting up. Nian Bing distinctly felt a wave of spirit force from Mao Mao, spreading out into the surrounding.

The ground trembled softly, and a small figure suddenly emerged from within. The figure arrived in front of Mao Mao very quickly, making noises of familiarity. It was a cockroach-like creature. This is the first time Nian Bing had seen such a huge cockroach, and was momentarily stunned. Mao Mao jumped off the cow with a flip, picked up the huge cockroach, and laughed. “Thank you! You can go back now.” There was a flash of red light, then the cockroach disappeared from her arms.

Nian Bing was shocked. “Is that also your pet?”

Nodding, Mao Mao explained, “Of course! I managed to escape from Big Sister Feng Nu all thanks to him! He’s called Qiang Qiang,

and is very obedient. It can isolate my smell, and find me even from a large distance. Furthermore, it can manifest all kinds of illusions! Earlier, the ‘me’ you saw back at Big Sister Feng Nu’s place was actually an illusion which Qiang Qiang made. Isn’t he impressive?”

Summoning Magic intrigued Nian Bing, and he was interested to learn more about it. When he heard this, Nian Bing could not contain his curiosity and asked, “How did your pets gain these abilities? They may look very ordinary on the surface, but they all have such special skills! Were they born with these abilities?”

“Of course not!” Mao Mao said. “They developed these abilities through father’s special methods. However, these abilities are all random. I only slowly found out their special abilities after we’ve formed a contract. Thus, Big brother, you should not underestimate Mao Mao!”

Nian Bing displayed a rare glint of respect in his eyes, sincerely saying, “Your father must be a really great Summoning Mage. If there is an opportunity in the future, I would like to get some pointers from him.”

Shaking her head furiously, Mao Mao anxiously said, “Don’t! You must not! Daddy is very fierce! It would be better if you never meet him. Apart from Mother, nobody is capable of handling Daddy. If he ever came looking, Mao Mao’s poor butt will be finished!”

Nian Bing roared with laughter. “You truly have great guts! If I were your Father, I would make sure to give your butt a good spanking after I caught you! Hmph, who asked you to be so

disobedient, daring to even run away from home!” Whilst conversing, he took Mao Mao towards a shaded area on the side of the road and sat down. After walking for half a day, a Magus like Nian Bing who did not have a strong body felt somewhat tired as well.

Mao Mao also sat down, not hesitating to lean against Nian Bing. The cow had went off on its own and was grazing by the roadside.

“Big Brother, what are you going to make for me to eat this time?” Mao Mao surveyed her surroundings curiously, and then looked at Nian Bing.

Smiling bitterly, Nian Bing said, “I was in too much of a hurry when we left, and did not bring anything. From what I can see, there are only some wild vegetables here that are edible. Even so, I did not bring any seasonings with me, so I can’t make anything with those wild vegetables. Why don’t you endure for a little longer? You can drink some of the milk from the cow in the meantime. If we are able to come across some wild beasts or perhaps a village later, I will make you something delicious.” Although he was a Chef, he could not possibly carry his kitchen equipments and ingredients with him everywhere.

As if having thought of something brilliant, Mao Mao’s eyes shone and asked, “Is it sufficient so long as you have a wild beast to work with? That’s too simple! Big brother, give me a moment. Oh, before that, I need to clarify. I will only be responsible for luring the wild beasts over. The one doing the killing will be you. Ok?” Having said that, her dark eyes flashed, spirit force surging. “I summon you in my name, Xi Yun, come on out, my pet, Na Na!” A

flash of red light appeared in front of the duo, and a fox with a silly thieving look appeared from within.

The fox Na Na blinked its eyes a few times as it looked around. When its eyes landed on the juicy cow, it seemed to suddenly focus its attention. Just when it was about to dash toward the tasty milk source, its fiery red tail was suddenly gripped and tugged upwards, causing it to be lifted disgruntledly into the air by Mao Mao. “Na Na, don’t be so mischievous! You must help Mao Mao ok?”

Na Na let out a few urgent jiji cries, all the while staring at the juicy cow with a thieving look in its eyes. The cow Dan Dan had obviously felt the presence of the silly fox, and was staring back at it with an unfriendly gaze, growling lowly. It was as if it was prepared to raise its hoofs at any moment and use its powerful body to charge at the silly looking fox, Na Na.

Mao Mao pointed at a nearby bush and instructed, “Na Na, I need you to go and piss over there. Hurry up, I will let you play with Dan Dan after you’ve finished.”

Na Na blinked its eyes, as if in deep contemplation. After a long time did it finally nodded its head reluctantly. Mao Mao finally put it down after seeing it agree. After rolling on the ground once, Na Na quickly dashed into the bush. Raising one leg, it began to urinate. This action was actually no different from a dog!

Very quickly, the wind carried a raw and rancid fishy smell towards them, which caused Nian Bing and Mao Mao to pinch their noses, a look of disgust on their faces. Na Na let out a yip of joy as though it were extremely relieved. With a sudden burst of

speed, it lightly dashed toward Dan Dan the cow. Dan Dan did not use its milk jets to attack. Instead, it raised its front hoofs and resolutely kicked out. Na Na was extremely agile and nimble. Breaking from its original frontal charge, it twisted its body and with a sway, was under the belly of Dan Dan. Clamping its mouth tightly around Dan Dan's *, it began sucking in deep gulps.

Nian Bing looked at Mao Mao and asked uncertainly, "Will the urine of this fox really be able to attract wild beasts?"

"Hehe, of course!" Mao Mao laughed mischievously. "Na Na's urine is very unique. The smell is not bad right?"

"Not bad my ass!" Nian Bing mumbled disgruntledly, "Apart from the fur on this dumb fox, which looks barely acceptable, there is nothing I like about it. Fox meat tastes revolting, and from what I can see, its piss is even more revolting!"

Discontented, Mao Mao said, "You can't talk about Na Na like that! It is actually very clever! Amongst all my pets, Na Na is actually a General!"

"Pfft," Nian Bing spurted in laughter. "In the past, I have heard of the term Dog-head General (used as a mocking term to refer to an unwise commander who constantly makes bad decisions). Never would I have imagined that I would meet a Fox-head General this day! If an opportunity presents itself, you must let me witness its cleverness! Is it only clever when it comes to drinking milk?" In that instant, a faint rustling sound was heard from behind Nian Bing. Startled, he stood up quickly and turned around, looking towards the cluster of trees. An animal was

walking out slowly towards their direction, sniffing the air as if following a smell. This creature looked to be a small deer. It had fur of yellow and black, no antlers and long slender legs. Its hind legs were slightly longer than its front legs. This was a musk deer. This musk deer was quite big, and had a mouth full of fierce looking teeth.

Mao Mao had never seen this kind of creature before and asked, “Big brother Nian Bing, what creature is this?”

Nian Bing put a finger to his lips, indicating for Mao Mao to be silent. After pulling her behind a tree, he waved his right hand and with a flash of green light, the Free Wind’s Gentle Hymn, Proud Sky Knife had appeared within his palms.

The musk deer was not very fast. Nian Bing focused his attention and suddenly jumped out from the cover of the tree, slashing fiercely at the musk deer. Although Nian Bing did not know any martial arts, the weapon in his hand was a top grade treasure blade. Green light flashed across the sky, creating a Wind Blade! This level of Wind Blade was naturally not worth much when placed in front of proper Martial Artists. However, it was more than enough against this musk deer. Blood sprayed everywhere, and the musk deer staggered, falling over strangely.

Chapter 35.2 – Roasted Fragrant Musk Deer

Mao Mao covered her eyes and said in annoyance, “Big Brother, you’re so vicious! To so easily take a life.”

Nian Bing replied without good humor, “If I didn’t kill it, what would you eat? If you don’t like it, then don’t eat anything next time. Hurry up and come with me, we will go into the forest to deal with it.” While talking, he walked over to the musk deer and picked up its corpse. After draining the blood from its wound, he took the lead and headed into the forest.

Mao Mao did not dare to look at the dead deer. She hid next to the dairy cow and followed Nian Bing into the forest. That fox, Na Na, seemed to have taken great interest in the musk deer in Nian Bing’s hands. She bounced and leaped next to him, wanting to eat it.

When they had entered the forest, Nian Bing instantly casted a rank 1 Freeze spell to seal even the head of the deer. Just as he was about to take the next step, Mao Mao came close to him and asked, “Big Brother, what kind of animal is this? Can we really eat it?”

Nian Bing shot her a look and answered, “My true profession is a chef. If I couldn’t even distinguish what things can and cannot be eaten, I would be a useless bastard. Learn this: This is a musk deer. You see, its canine teeth protrude slightly from its lip, identifying it as a male musk deer. Moreover, there is a faint fragrance coming from its body. If my guess is not wrong, this is a fragrant musk deer. Our luck is pretty good.”

Mao Mao became interested by Nian Bing's words. She asked in doubt, "Big Brother, what is a musk deer?!"

A light flashed in Nian Bing's hand and the Proud Sky Knife appeared once more. He did not reposition the musk deer's body, but instead directly cut off its head in one chop. While moving he said, "Musk deers are a type of animal. Their appearances bears some similarity to [deer](#), but a little smaller. Male musk deer have larger canines and a musk gland. It is a rare ingredient for making gourmet food. It also quite good for medicinal cuisine. Today you have good luck in finding good food." While speaking, he had already pulled out the deer's two canines, and then tossed the head to the fox Na Na who was drooling in desire. "Take it and go. I don't want to smell your filthy scent."

Of family Cervidae. Musk Deer are of family Moschidae

Nian Bing took the musk deer's body and laid it flat. The knife in his hand flashed and immediately the musk deer's body had been wounded. The fragrant smell had become ten times thicker in an instant. Nian Bing carefully ripped off a strip of cloth from his clothing and laid it flat on the ground. From inside the deer, he fished out a sticky clump of crystals and carefully laid them on the cloth. "So this really is a fragrance deer. I've never seen one. These yellow things are called the [musk gland](#); these are the most precious part of the fragrance deer. Before, when Master was teaching me cooking skills, he gave me an introduction to every type of meat. He mentioned the fragrant musk deer. Musk deer are called musk deer because of the male deer. Male musk deer are called musk deer, and female musk deer are called [musk does](#). Male musk deers have the fragrant musk glands. The fragrant musk deer is incredibly precious, especially this musk gland. When used in perfume, it keeps incredibly strong and it can repel many kinds of small insects. If used in drugs, it can open meridians and is

taken through the orifice. I will give this musk gland to you as a present in a moment.”

I’ve been calling this a musk gland, but I’m not entirely sure what it is. Also, musk glands are used for perfume, not eating. I think

All right, this is real fucking confusing. So the word TJSS uses for musk deer normally is 獐 or 獐子, which is a musk deer according to baidu. Here, he’s saying that male 獐 are called 麝, or musk. Female 獐 are just called 獐

When Mao Mao heard she was getting a present, she had forgotten the bloody scene from before. “Okay! Okay! What are you giving me?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said in return, “Don’t be impatient. We’ll talk after we’ve finished eating.” He carefully took out the entire musk gland and wrapped it up in the cloth before setting it aside. With a exquisite show of his knife art, he skinned the musk deer while perfectly preserving its flesh. Taking advantage of its frozen state, Nian Bing pulled out its innards and tossed them to the side. Then he took a straight branch from one of the trees next to them and speared the musk deer through. While doing that, his Proud Sky Knife never rested until the entire tree was completely chopped into firewood. If Xue Ji knew what he was using the Proud Sky Knife for, he didn’t know if he would regret giving it to him.

A rank 1 fireball spell was nothing for Nian Bing. The kindling immediately started to burn. There was no water here, but Nian Bing possessed the ice attribute. By using a bath of ice crystals he rubbed the dirt off the musk deer until it was clean. Nian Bing

looked at the musk deer and pondered. He said, “It’s a real pity that there aren’t any suitable seasonings here. If not, it could’ve been more perfect, nearing unity.” While talking, he started to roast the musk deer in his hands over the flame. He did not, like ordinary, roast this deer over a wooden support contraption, but instead used his own arm strength to turn the stick in his hands. Nian Bing held the deer very far away from the flames and turned it very carefully. His hands were extremely steady and all of his attention was focused on the musk deer.

Mao Mao asked in doubt, “Big Brother, when Daddy roasted meat for me before, he didn’t do it as far as you! Your fire is far away, can it be cooked through?”

Nian Bing smiled faintly. He replied, “Perhaps I am far from your father in magic, but when it comes to cooking, I’m afraid he cannot be above me. Don’t tell me you didn’t know that right now, we don’t have seasonings? Normally, when you roast something you will brush it with marinade and oil so that you can prevent the meat from being burnt. Right now, we don’t have any of those things. If we want the musk deer meat to taste good without being burnt, we need to use the natural oils in its body. This musk deer has enough, but first we need the fat in its body to be heated and then gradually roast it. This way, the cooking will be distributed evenly and its flavor will reach its optimal state. Go wait by the side for a bit and then we can eat.”

He didn’t have any condiments, but he did have Hundred Flavor Head Salt on him. He didn’t hastily toss the salt out, but carefully turned the musk deer. His movements were neither hurried nor slow; he just kept a steady pace from beginning to end.

Just as Nian Bing had spoken, the oils from the roasting had gradually appeared. Nian Bing slowly lowered the deer in his hand while outputting some of his fire magic towards the musk deer meat. With the addition of magic power, the musk deer gradually turned red. At this time, Nian Bing picked up a bit of the musk gland he had prepared earlier and used the Proud Sky Knife to carefully smear it over the deer's body. No doubt the Proud Sky Knife was a top quality treasure knife; not a single drop of the oil touched it. Once that was done, it brightened like before. The green light was moving like the autumn water of a girl's eyes.

Nian Bing who was totally fixed on roasting the meat and Mao Mao, who was smelling the fragrance and wiping of drool, did not discover that the danger that was nearing them.

The faint scent gradually became stronger, and the special scent of the musk gland and the scent of the roasting oil effectively blended together. It was a mouthwatering scent. Mao Mao drooled endlessly, and that fox had abandoned the musk deer's head and had crouched next to Mao Mao. Its drool dripped down from its mouth and its eyes were filled with a greedy light. The dairy cow Dan Dan, who was only interested in vegetables, was not fascinated by the scent and leisurely ate its grass.

An hour later, the deer Nian Bing was holding had completely turned a golden yellow, while Mao Mao and the fox Na Na had been fixated on it the whole time. Nian Bing alternated hands for roasting. If he hadn't trained for many years, he would not have been able to support the deer for such a long time. This musk deer was about ten kilograms. With a slight smile, Nian Bing shot a glance at the human and beast next to him. "Looking at your appearance, it's like you haven't eaten anything in several days.

It's good now." Saying this, he took out the salt he had brought from his space ring and evenly sprinkled it on the musk deer. He didn't use much salt in order to prevent masking the natural taste of the musk deer.

Just as Mao Mao and the Fox Na Na were preparing to pounce, the dairy cow Dan Dan's massive head suddenly lifted. The hairs on its back suddenly stood up and issued a low moo; it was a menacing bellow. While it cried out, it retreated to Nian Bing and Mao Mao like it had met some sort of danger.

The Proud Sky Knife trembled in Nian Bing's grasp. The surrounding wind element intensified very distinctly, and a faint hum came from the knife. Nian Bing Immediately understood what the Proud Sky Knife was doing. Although he possessed three knives, the Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh and the Flame God's Roar were completed by his blood in their final forging; their relationship with him was much more intimate. But this knife, the Free Wind's Hymn was just as strong. In the beginning, Nian Bing had used it to show off his fastest knife skills, so they had reached an understanding with each other. The Proud Sky's Knife's humming could only have one meaning: a warning.

Nian Bing gave the stick with the fragrant musk deer to Mao Mao and pulled her behind him. In a low voice he said, "Stay close to me, there might be danger." While saying this, the Free Wind's Hymn took to the air and in its place was the Flame God's Roar and the Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh. He could not use Morning Dew, but he needed to be prepared because the mysterious foe was of unknown strength. If he had to save his life, then he wouldn't care about those things.

A rustling sound appeared. Nian Bing's eyes exuded a sliver of a strange light. What could this be?

The sound came from a tall shrub. Nian Bing coldly looked at the shrubbery, a chant already on his lips.

The fox Na Na poked out from under Nian Bing's legs and suddenly trembled while jumping into Mao Mao's embrace. Mao Mao went blank for a moment and then said to Nian Bing, "Big Brother, Na Na seems to be scared. That thing is very dangerous; you have to be careful!"

Nian Bing nodded his head and then pointed the broad True Sun Knife in front of him. A fist-sized rank 1 fireball appeared in front of him. Controlled by his spiritual power, it made a beautiful arc into the back of the undergrowth. At the same time, he had already prepared a stronger magic.

The fireball created a bright burst in the back of the undergrowth. An angry roar shook the ground and a gigantic black figure stood up behind the shrubbery. The bush was originally 1.7 meters tall but it only reached up to its chest. Amidst its bellow, its massive body slammed forwards, completely crushing the shrubbery in an instant and revealing its sturdy body.

Nian Bing stared wide-eyed at the lifeform before him. Heavens! What was this? He had never seen such a creature before. From its appearance, he reckoned it was about 3.3 meters tall with its upper half erect. Its whole body was covered in a steel-grey outer skin that looked extremely durable. Its body shape resembled a giant lizard, but it was obviously much larger than a lizard. There were

two rows of hard, black fin-like protrusions on its back. Its powerful and rough back legs supported its massive body with its long tail dragging behind it. When it roared, it exposed its gigantic sword-like teeth. From head to tail, it reached 6 meters long with its front limbs obviously shorter than its back limbs. But its claws were large. Nian Bing had reason to believe that it could easily tear his body to shreds.

The ground trembled as the monster stepped out of the undergrowth. Its dark green eyes death-glared at Mao Mao behind Nian Bing. It would be more precise to say, at the musk gland in Mao Mao's hands.

An excited voice came from Mao Mao behind him. "Waa, it's actually a cute iron-backed sword-toothed lizard. Since it's this big, it's probably over a hundred years old."

Cute? Nian Bing did not feel that any part of this guy was cute at all. Its body exuded a formless pressure that made it hard for him to breathe. Did he want to eat the musk deer? If he could exchange the musk deer for it leaving, then that would be fortunate. "Mao Mao, since you recognize this creature, does it have any special characteristics?"

"It has, it has! Father told me once that iron-backed sword-toothed lizards are extremely savage. If it sees another creature, it will see it as its food without the slightest chance of getting lucky. Daddy also especially warned me that if I met with this kind of thing, I should just turn around and run away. If I can't run away, then I should give it the cow to eat. I reckon it'll take a moment for it to eat. Big Brother Nian Bing, can you help me catch him? If I

can get it to be my pet, then I won't be afraid of getting bullied by other people."

Nian Bing pulled Mao Mao several steps in reverse. "You speak so lightly. We should first save our lives. Can you command your cow to give up its life? I will try to use magic, maybe I can beat it back. However, the outer skin of his body seems to be very tough."

The iron-backed sword-toothed lizard glared like a tiger watching its prey. For an unknown reason, it wasn't in a hurry to attack them.

Mao Mao seemed unworried about the danger she was in. "Dan Dan has already ran behind us; it won't be easy to make it commit suicide. Big Brother Nian Bing, to tell you some bad news, the iron-backed sword-toothed lizard is also called the iron-backed land dragon. Although it is not a true dragon, due to it having some dragon lineage, it has some immunity to magic. I remember Daddy said that ordinary iron-backed sword-toothed lizards have immunity to any attribute rank 4 magic and below.

Hearing Mao mao say this, Nian Bing immediately breathed a sigh of relief. "Then that's good. The highest rank of magic I can use is rank 6."

Mao mao giggled and said, "Big Brother, but the hundred year old iron-backed sword-toothed lizard in front of you is not an ordinary iron-backed sword-toothed lizard! Daddy said that an over one-hundred-year-old iron-backed sword-toothed lizard is immune to rank 6 and below magic. Although it is not like a true dragon, which is immune to rank 8 magic and below, your magic will just

be a tickle for it.”

Chapter 36.1 – The Golden-Backed Land Dragon King

Nian Bing's heart filled with the desire to throttle Mao Mao. Of all times for her to be excited; they were in the midst of a monster immune to all magic at six rank and below. Heavens! He wanted to know how to beat this thing, but he was just a mage. If he was the only person there, he was certain that he could have used his Ice and Fire Magic Source to distract iron-backed land dragon's gaze and then use Snowstorm to fly away. But the troublesome thing was Mao Mao's presence; his Snowstorm was unable to carry two people. Could he just cast her away without caring? Nian Bing's heart entertained the selfish thought for a moment, but he immediately gave up the idea. He definitely could not do that.

He cast the Fire Wall spell that he had prepared with the Flame God's Roar, and Nian Bing immediately turned to Mao Mao to say, "Hurry up and run away with your pets. Leave this to me." The rank 4 Fire Wall spell soared six meters high, blocking the iron-backed earth dragon's advancing figure.

Mao Mao looked at Nian Bing with surprise. "Big Brother Nian Bing, you can't defeat it!"

Nian Bing said with anxiousness, "If I'm letting you run, then you should run! Hurry now. I'll stay here, I may not be able to beat it, but does it mean I won't be able to distract it? Run, now!"

Mao Mao saw the concern in Nian Bing's anxious expression. Her large, black eyes seemed to be full of feeling. She made a noise in agreement and chased after her milk cow. The milk cow Dan Dan

and the fox Na Na, one running faster than other, were already over ten meters away. When they saw Mao Mao running toward them, Dan Dan immediately let out a happy cheer.

Nian Bing did not have the time to pay attention to Mao Mao escaping. He turned around, and his intense focus was visible in his eyes. He chanted his specialty spell in a low voice. “Mighty Fire God! Please allow me to make use of your left hand, and let the flame descend to earth to eradicate the wicked power. Let the blaze illuminate the whole earth and destroy all the barriers obstructing me. – The Fire God’s Left Hand.”

A gigantic black shadow pierced through the Fire Wall spell. Just as Mao Mao had said, the rank 4 Fire Wall spell did not have any effect. The iron-backed land dragon that had originally been fixated on its delicacy seemed to be infuriated by the Fire Wall spell. With an angry bellow, it violently charged at Nian Bing.

A Snowstorm scroll raised Nian Bing high, but because his attention was divided with controlling the Fire God’s Left Hand, he did not fly very high. The iron-backed land dragon did not seem to be interested with him and suddenly increased its speed to chase after Mao Mao. The trees and shrubs blocking its way were crushed underfoot, failing to provide any sort of deterrence.

Nian Bing was somewhat panicky. Mao Mao was not running fast. With the iron-backed land dragon’s speed, it would not be long before it caught up to her. The Fire God’s Left Hand clenched itself tightly. Under Nian Bing’s full control, it soared like a meteor toward the iron-backed land dragon. With a violent turn, it smacked into the iron-backed land dragon’s chest hard.

Sparks scattered everywhere. With the use of the Flame God's Roar, the Fire God's Left hand approached rank 6 in might. Even if the iron-backed land dragon had a strong defence, it couldn't but be stopped by the explosive attack, and its forward momentum halted. The iron-backed land dragon turned around; its dark green eyes were filled with a savageness, obviously extremely dissatisfied with the Nian Bing who was but a mere housefly.

Nian Bing knew at this moment that only his Ice and Fire Source could contend against this big brute before him. He inhaled deep and just like when he faced Long Zhi, he swapped out the Ice Goddess' Sigh with the Icicle Wand.

"Mighty Fire God! Please allow me to make use of your left hand and let the flame descend to earth to eradicate the wicked power. Let the blaze illuminate the whole earth and destroy all the barriers obstructing me. – The Fire God's Left Hand." The giant Fire God's Left Hand shone brightly on Nian Bing's left.

"Powerful ice element! Condense and turn into the ice from the ancient Cold River, turn into ice from the splendid moon. Ice and ice combine and become two ice globes." The Icicle Wand slanted forward and a blue light condensed, filling the air with a biting cold. Giant balls of ice appeared, half light blue and half dark blue.

The iron-backed land dragon did not possess low intelligence. It had originally wanted to continue pursuing Mao Mao when it suddenly discovered that an oppressive force was coming from the air behind it. It couldn't help but stop in its tracks. It seemed to have felt something and growled. It started to run away—still in

the same direction as Mao Mao.

Nian Bing was anxious. He knew that he hadn't the time to compress his magic. With a shout, the Twin Balls of Ice and the Fire God's Left Hand were simultaneously cast out. The red and blue lights separated to each side of the iron-backed land dragon, slamming against it.

Not condensing the magic made it comparatively more stable, and it was easier for Nian Bing to control. On top of that, before he had left Ice and Snow City, the Flame God's Stone and the Ice Goddess' Stone had strengthened his magic, making him more skilled at controlling this spell. The Icicle Wand and the True Sun Knife simultaneously were brought together before his body. He shouted, "Ice—Fire—Magic—Source—."

The Fire God's Left Hand and the Twin Balls of Ice immediately collided together in the air. Under Nian Bing's control, the ginormous explosive force rebounded and headed straight for the iron-backed land dragon.

The iron-backed land dragon bellowed angrily. Its massive form immediately curled up into a ball. The fin-like protrusions on its back suddenly turned gold. The firepower generated by the Ice and Fire Source was truly strong. Although it hadn't been compressed, the explosive might was equivalent to the apex of rank 7 spells. The surrounding vegetation exploded to pieces by the giant explosive force, and the dirt was sent flying in clumps nearly ten meters in the air.

Nian Bing's expression was pale as he descended onto the ground.

The successive use of large spells had consumed half of his magic power. Although the Ice and Fire Source was extremely tough, the amount of magic power was the biggest limiter of mages.

The dust gradually dispersed, and Nian Bing stared dumbstruck. The iron-backed land dragon was actually slowly getting to its feet. The outer layer of its skin had turned completely gold. At the same time, its dark green eyes had turned blood red.

Its furious roar made the surrounding forest tremble. Even under a spell at the pinnacle of rank 7, it did not even bear the slightest move. In the next moment, its gigantic form was barreling madly in Nian Bing's direction, roaring in anger. The sound waves shook Nian Bing till he didn't have the concentration to chant a spell. Helplessly, he could only take out two scrolls, which utilized the Ice and Fire source to attack. Although the strength of the magic was not as strong as the attack before, it was the only way he could respond.

Right at this moment, Mao Mao's clear voice suddenly came forth. "Dan Dan, spray. Tian Tian, charge."

Eight beams of white light slammed into the iron-backed land dragon like lightning, making its forward charge unsteady for a moment. The cow Dan Dan had already reached a nearby location, and its two hooves were stamping on the ground.

A grey-black figure wrapped in a grey mist attacked the iron-backed land dragon from the front. With a bang, the grey figure shot away, and the iron-backed land dragon's forward progression finally halted.

Mao Mao had already run back at an unknown time, hugging her little pink pig Guan Guan and glowering at the iron-backed land dragon.

Seeing her returned, Nian Bing immediately panicked. “Mao Mao, how did you not hear what I say. Why did you come back? Run away now!” While saying this, he threw two scrolls with shaking hands and inhaled deeply, quickly chanting out spells for the second time.

The Ice and Fire Source’s powerful attacking strength once again brought the iron-backed land dragon’s focus to himself. At this moment, Nian Bing was feeling neither angry or happy, his gaze was just focused on the colossal monster before him without any intention of retreating.

Since it was attacked twice by the Ice and Fire Source, although it hadn’t injured the iron-backed land dragon, the attack with the two extremes of ice and fire caused it intense suffering. It lowered its head violently, and golden light emitted from its back. Ten or so rays of light headed straight for Nian Bing with a sky-shattering sound. This time, the iron-backed land dragon finally used its own unique skill.

Mao Mao cried out in surprise. “Guan Guan, bring out your skill, Beast—Blood—Flare—Up—.”

The little pink pig Guan Guan emitted a strangely enormous pressure. It’s body flew out straight from Mao Mao’s embrace with

a speed quite unproportionate for its body. Like it was filled with air, it swelled up to ten times its size, and a blood-colored light wrapped around its entire body as it violently collided with the iron-backed land dragon. Although it was moving quickly, its special skill was not faster than the light. Those golden light rays would still attack Nian Bing.

“Ice—Fire—Magic—Source—.” Gathering the last of his magic power, Nian Bing brought out the Ice and Fire Source once more. This time, his spirit power extremely compressed them, and the spells casted were actually smaller by a third. The massive magic power immediately collided, forming an energy whirlpool that swallowed those ten rays of light.

The iron-backed land dragon’s strongest part was its body. Although these rays of golden light were suited for long-range attacks, they weren’t as awesome as they appeared. The firepower of the spell and its body collided together, cancelling each other out. Under the powerful attack, the iron-backed land dragon couldn’t help but stumble. At that moment, Guan Guan, who was using its full-strength Beast Blood Flare-Up special skill, slammed into it.

With a bang, the iron-backed land dragon that couldn’t even be sent flying by the Ice and Fire Source was actually sent flying by Guan Guan’s collision. It even rolled several times on the ground, leaving blood on the ground where it hit. The golden luster headed to the areas where blood was flowing out, seemingly to heal its wounds.

Guan Guan also did not endure it well. Its enlarged body shot

back like a rubber ball. When it fell into Mao Mao's embrace, it had already returned to its original size. Exhausted, it closed its eyes.

Nian Bing's whole body was overcome with a fit of dizziness. He managed to keep himself from falling down, but a trickle of blood flowed from the corner of his lips. The iron-backed land dragon's defensive strength was too powerful. Even if he used all of his magic power, he still could not wound it.

An ear-piercing shriek suddenly came from Mao Mao. The iron-backed land dragon that had already gotten to its feet immediately tumbled down to the ground. It looked to be suffering. Although the shriek was not directed at Nian Bing, he still felt like his brain had been pierced with needles. He swayed and immediately fell onto the ground. But at this moment he was still clear-headed enough for two words to flash across his mind – spirit magic. Mao Mao's screech had used what seemed to be pointed spiritual power. Though Nian Bing believed in the strength of his spiritual power, he could not compare to her.

With a wan face, Mao Mao ran over to Nian Bing. She seemed to be very weak. "Big Brother Nian Bing, we must quickly run away. All of this is Mao Mao's mistake, it was me who hurt you." While saying this, she helped Nian Bing to stand.

Seeing Mao Mao's teary expression, Nian Bing consoled, "I can't blame you. It was the iron-backed land dragon that was too strong."

Mao Mao called back the dairy cow Dan Dan, and unsummoned the big rat Tian Tian, who had been knocked unconscious, along

with the weakened piglet Guan Guan. Supporting Nian Bing, she said, “Big Brother, you should ride on Dan Dan. I didn’t expect that this was actually a evolved golden-backed land dragon. We must run away quick. The spirit intimidation will only make it stunned for a moment. It will soon wake up.”

In the face of a crisis, Nian Bing’s mind was extremely awake. “It’s stunned? Then we have an opportunity.” His gaze fell on the True Sun Knife in his hand. Nian Bing snorted coldly, “True Sun is not only the Flame God’s Roar. It is also a sharp blade that can cut through anything. I do not believe that that land dragon could defend against the True Sun Knife.” He brought out a magic scroll. While opening the scroll, and immediately, the scroll turned into a giant ball of fire. It condensed into a giant hand; it was the rank 5 fire spell – The Fire God’s Left Hand.

Although he had used almost all of his magic power, he still had his spirit power. Nian Bing controlled the Fire God’s Left Hand to pick up the True Sun Knife and immediately sent it flying in the direction of the golden-backed land dragon. Nian Bing’s had only one goal, which was to use the sharpness of the True Sun Knife to kill the golden-backed land dragon which had threatened his and Mao Mao’s lives. This was his only opportunity, if not, how could he catch up to it if it ran?

The Fire God’s left hand and the Flame God’s Roar, the True Sun Knife, fused together and descended towards the golden-backed land dragon like a ray of light. The moment he saw the True Sun Knife’s red light hit the golden-backed land dragon, a voice suddenly spoke. “Enough.”

This one simple word seemed to slam against Nian Bing's mind like a hammer. He saw black for a sec, and he couldn't help but spray out a mouthful of blood. The True Sun Knife wrapped in the Fire God's Left Hand automatically dissipated. A white light suddenly flew out and brought the True Sun Knife to the side.

Nian Bing did not fall down with Mao Mao's support, but was overwhelmed with shock when he looked at where the white light had disappeared to. He could only see a white clothed person slowly walking forward. This person was about the same height as him, but was a bit thinner. He seemed to be over thirty years old. His looks were ordinary but his expression was not. In the first look, his black phoenix eyes were plain, but when you paid attention to his expression, his expression seemed to have a metallic quality, like it could pierce a hole through your soul. With a light purview, Nian Bing was surprised to discover that his soul seemed to have been pierced through by some indescribable object. The abnormal hard to bear feeling made him unable to help but spray out another mouthful of blood as his mind was overcome by a wave of dizziness.

Chapter 36.2 – The Golden-Backed Land Dragon King

The True Sun Knife was in the white-clothed person's hand. An eagle about the size of a falcon with white feathers and red eyes sat with its two claws firmly grasped onto his shoulder. It was obvious that the True Sun Knife had been carried off with its mouth. What made Nian Bing feel strange was that the white eagle was not affected by the temperature of the True Sun Knife.

“Daddy.” Mao Mao's shout made Nian Bing's heart tighten. Although he had already guessed as much, he couldn't help but feel shocked by Mao Mao's confirmation. However, he was not the slightest bit nervous.. As a mage without any magic power left, what was the use of anxiety in front of a strong summoner? Remaining calm was the best option.

Looking at her father, Mao Mao didn't pounce on him enthusiastically, but instead inched behind Nian Bing. At this moment, Nian Bing had become her shield.

“You still haven't returned.” Looking at his panicking daughter, Xi La De was in a good mood. These days, he was always out and about looking for his daughter's whereabouts. He was helpless in the face of Mao Mao's extreme craftiness, who used every sort of trick she had to confuse Xi La De. If not for her summoned beasts having a special spiritual aura, Xi La De would have had no way of finding her.

“Daddy, Daddy how did you get here? Big Brother Nian Bing is very weak right now. I can't go back, I need to support him!” Mao

Mao adopted an innocent expression.

Xi La De's gaze turned to Nian Bing, and he said indifferently, "Since my daughter has used her summoning technique in front of me and you are a mage, you should already know our secret."

Nian Bing coolly looked at Xi La De. In the face of that steely gaze, he would not shrink back in the slightest, "That's right, I already know. Could you return my knife to me?" He knew the meaning of Xi La De's words. From the very first time he had seen Mao Mao, Nian Bing had known that in order to protect their secret, the null people of the summoning technique bloodline would not hesitate to kill.

Xi La De looked at the True Sun Knife he held. His eyes flashed with a strange light. "Not bad, this is a very good knife, while also being a top-quality magic item. It's a pity that your current ability cannot bring out all of its potential. He casually tossed the True Sun Knife at Nian Bing. With Nian Bing's familiarity with knives, he did not use his eyes and easily caught the knife.

"Roar—" The golden-backed land dragon angrily roared again. It swayed as it stood, still seeming like it was somewhat dizzy. It looked around everywhere, searching for the existence of its enemy.

Xi La De turned to the golden-backed land dragon. His eyes suddenly flashed, and Nian Bing was surprised to see that Xi La De's black eyes had instantly turned frighteningly white. He spat out a simple word. "Quiet." It was intimidation with his soul. His spirit power accumulated and directly enshrouded the golden-

backed land dragon. The golden-backed land dragon that Nian Bing's full-power attack couldn't harm in the slightest, trembled harshly under Xi La De's simple command. Crouched on the ground, it didn't dare move.

Xi La De's eyes returned to normal. Without minding his daughter, he turned to look at Nian Bing and asked, "Do you know why all of your magic power was inferior to my one word?"

Nian Bing thought for a moment before replying, "That golden-backed land dragon has an extremely high defense. Its outer skin is like an armor for its entire body with extremely high physical and magic defense. But no matter what kind of living being it is, it will still have a weakness. I think that the golden-backed land dragon's outer defense is very strong but its spirit power might not be as powerful. By attacking its mind directly with your spirit magic, it naturally could have effects that I have no way of producing. This probably is the principle of one thing suppressing another, like how water suppresses fire and light suppresses darkness. Of course, I do not mean to belittle the strength of spirit magic. A martial artist's qi can suppress ordinary spells, but spirit magic can suppress martial artists. Although their spirit power is not weak, the number of mages who could withstand the strength of your spirit power attack is not many. Moreover, you have the mysterious summoning technique."

A hint of a rare smile appeared on Xi La De's stern face. "To still be so calm even when almost all of your magic power has been consumed, your spirit power must be pretty good. I will give you a chance; if you can survive an attack from the snow eagle on my shoulder, I will spare your life. Mao Mao, come here. If not, I will confiscate all of your pets."

Mao Mao blinked, seeming to resolve herself to do something. She moved her body to block Nian Bing. “Daddy, you cannot kill Big Brother Nian Bing! Big Sister Feng Nu said he is a good person.”

Xi La De creased his eyebrows. “Feng Nu?”

Mao Mao replied, “Big Sister Feng Nu told me to say the words ‘daughter of a phoenix’ to you. Daddy, let Big Brother Nian Bing go. At worst, I will go home with you.”

Xi La De snorted coldly and said, “You silly girl, you actually dare to negotiate with me? Come.” His final word was full of an intimidating aura. Under the spiritual pressure, Mao Mao’s complexion became even paler. Nevertheless, she still remained blocking in front of Nian Bing, forcefully shaking her head.

Nian Bing patted Mao Mao’s shoulder. “Go and return to your father. I don’t need a woman to protect me. Don’t worry; I will be fine.”

Mao Mao turned her head back to Nian Bing, her eyes filled with tears. “Big Brother Nian Bing, but you don’t have any magic right now! The snow eagle is very fierce. Big Brother, you.....”

“By the power of the spirit, children who have lost something! I will lead you into the lost eternity.” Xi La De’s voice held a certain magnetism. When she heard this voice, Mao Mao could not help but shudder. Her eyes emitted a dazed light as she turned around

and walked to her father, step by step.

Spirit magic was truly strange. Mao Mao obediently walked to her father's side and stood there, seeming to have lost her will. Xi La De calmly said to Nian Bing, "No matter what sort of relationship you have with Feng Nu, no matter what happened between you and my daughter, if you cannot block my snow eagle's attack, you will die."

Nian Bing breathed in deeply, his gaze falling on the snow eagle on Xi La De's shoulder. "Come." The single word was filled with his confidence. He waved his right hand and tossed out four scrolls from his space ring onto the ground in front of him. Without any magic, he could only rely on scrolls. Although he had spent a lot of time on these scrolls, they couldn't compare to his life.

Xi La De smiled calmly and said, "I want to see what sort of strange power the Ice and Fire Magic Source has. Little Snow, attack."

The cold aura emitted by the snow eagle caused the air to suddenly become bitingly cold. It spread its wings and pushed off from Xi La De's shoulder. The snow eagle itself actually had an attribute.

A light flashed and four scrolls fell into Nian Bing's hands. Although the snow eagle looked to be far less intimidating than the golden-backed land dragon, he did not dare slack off in the slightest.

The snow eagle advanced, unfurling its snow-white wings approaching a span of two meters. With a loud and clear shriek, two streaks of ice shot out from its wings and condensed into two giant ice blades. With a flash of blue light, they intersected each other as they headed towards Nian Bing. Nian Bing twirled his fingers and a ball of flame ignited, rapidly becoming a Fire Wall that appeared in front of him. Soon after, he sent the remaining three scrolls flying out at the same time while retreating several steps. The ice blades collided with the Fire Wall, and the strength of the attack was weakened by a large amount. At this time, gigantic Twin Balls of Ice melded together. The remainder of ice blades' strength could only leave two deep scores on the surface of very large Twin Ball of Ice before they started to spin rapidly in the air and, tracing a beautiful arc, heading straight for the snow eagle. Offense was the best defense.

The two red eyes of the snow eagle were filled with a disdainful light. Its wings suddenly retracted as it descended towards the ground. Just as it almost collided with the Twin Balls of Ice, the snow eagle immediately increased its speed and charged straight at Nian Bing. The latter simultaneously cast out two scrolls in order to cast a type of Ice and Fire Source attack. With a wild exploding sound, an amalgamation of red and blue light formed into a giant whirlpool attack in front of the approaching the snow eagle. This was the strongest attack that he could currently make.

The clear and piercing voice of the eagle came again. It was not equipped with strong defensive capabilities like the golden-backed land dragon. The two opposite extreme magics of the Ice and Fire Source simultaneously erupted. Cold and hot intertwining together produced strength that was not so simple. The snow eagle that had been charging forward earlier, forcefully changed the direction of its attack . It skyrocketed upward right before

reaching the Ice and Fire Magic Source, and in the air it traced a parabola, evading the attack and once again charging at Nian Bing.

Nian Bing's eyes widened. He spat out another mouthful of blood and bit his tongue, bringing his spiritual power to its limits, "Return." The Ice and Fire Source that had been rushing forward stiffly stopped its forward momentum and reversed directions, now pursuing the snow eagle from behind. At the same time, Nian Bing raised his Icicle Wand high. "Rise, Baptism of Ice." The four scrolls he had thrown at the beginning shattered at the same time. A chill was released into the air and, in the next moment, formed into a giant ice cage that encircled the snow eagle from the front, limiting its freedom. Baptism of Ice was a rank 6 ice magic. There were two scrolls of the four that could utilize its strength. The other two were both auxiliary rank 4 Ice spells. The four scrolls activating simultaneously meant that it took an instant for the ice prison in the air to thicken to a third of a meter. The only direction not sealed was behind the snow eagle in the direction of the Ice and Fire source.

The snow eagle felt the danger and shrieked harshly. It flapped its wings hard and covered its body in a layer of blue light. Like an arrow, it charged upwards.

"If you want to run, I won't let you. Change, flame." A boiling purple flame was emitted within the empty ice cage. The flame came crashing down from the uppermost part of the ice wall, cloaking the entire space within the ice cage. Right at this moment, Nian Bing had used up his spiritual power to control the magic in succession and he finally could not endure it any longer. His butt landed on the ground, and the Ice and Fire Source which was sweeping away all before it, disappeared without any magic

control.

A shattering sound could clearly be heard. The snow eagle's figure burst through into the sky, but its crystalline, snow-white feathers had turned black.

The snow eagle suddenly became larger in the air, shrieking ear-piercingly with no end. Several groups of snowflakes floated in the air, dancing in the wind and becoming increasingly wild.

Nian Bing's heart froze. He knew that even if he could have kept his control for a few more moments, even the Ice and Fire Source could not kill that powerful magic beast. At best he could injure it severely, but right now it seemed that he did not have an opportunity. The snow eagle's ability it was using was clearly stronger than the rank 4 Snowstorm. Currently, he didn't have any scrolls surpassing rank 4. Besides sitting down and waiting for death, there was nothing he could do. But Nian Bing did not close his eyes and watched the snow eagle in the air, his heart still unresigned.

“Enough, Little [Ying](#).” A red light suddenly flashed, wrapping the snow eagle till it could no longer be seen. The Snowstorm that had just been condensed disappeared.

Ying means eagle btw. I'm bipolar.

Xi La De strode slowly in front of Nian Bing. Sensing the surrounding activity of the magic element, he said with a calm smile, “You are much stronger than I had imagined. Did you make those scrolls?”

Nian Bing nodded and replied, “That’s right, I made them. I could not completely block your snow eagle’s attack, so why did you release me?”

Xi La De extended a hand to Nian Bing. Nian Bing was not polite and grabbed his hand to stand. His body was hit with a spell of dizziness, and the fuzziness in his mind seemed to intensify. If it weren’t for the Heavenly Flower Tile on his chest emitting its warm aura, he may have fallen into an unconsciousness state sooner.

A light flashed in Xi La De’s hand, and a cherry sized green medicinal pill appeared. “Eat it. Your lost magic power relies on yourself, but this Concentration Pill should be able to cure your weakness.”

Nian Bing took the medicine pill and swallowed it. The medicine pill immediately turned into a bitter liquid and flowed into his stomach when it entered his mouth. A hot feeling rose within him, and Nian Bing’s forehead shone with a sheen of sweat, but his spirit had improved. He did not say thanks to Xi Li De, but looked at him coolly, waiting for him to speak.

Xi La De looked at Nian Bing in the same manner. “Are you not afraid that I fed you poison?”

Nian Bing smiled. “Senior, do you not think that this question is too much? If you wanted to kill me, you could’ve done so in a hundred ways. Did you need to use a basic trick like poison to do

that? Moreover, when you said that you would let me withstand an attack from the snow eagle, I knew you did not want to kill me. If you want to ask something, you can ask.”

Chapter 37.1 – The Story Of The Dragon God

Xi La De's gaze held a hint of surprise. "Good. You're quite talented. The Ice and Fire Magic Source and our summoning technique are equally mysterious, and both possess vast history. But I didn't kill you because of that, but rather because you disregarded your own personal safety, willing to pay with your life to let my daughter escape. How long have you known Mao Mao?"

Nian Bing forced a smile and said, "About four hours or so. We met each other around noon. You can relax, I only see her as a little sister."

Xi La De was surprised. "Only four hours? In such a short period of time, you got Mao Mao to trust you. It seems that you are really outstanding. And what about Feng Nu that Mao Mao spoke of? What's her relationship with you?"

Feng Nu's beautiful face flashed before Nian Bing's eyes. He said plainly, "We are friends. You wouldn't happen to know what the daughter of the phoenix, those four words that Mao Mao just said, mean?"

Xi La De's eyes twinkled, and he replied, "This is something you don't need to know right now. If Feng Nu wanted to tell you, she would've said so. There is too much dust here; let's go sit on the side." While saying this, he gesticulated in the direction that Mao Mao had first escaped to.

Nian Bing let out a silent sigh of relief. Before a mysterious

summoner mage, he was under extremely intense pressure. In his mind, Mao Mao had become synonymous with the word trouble. Since meeting her, he had been plagued with troubles nonstop. Right now, he wished for Xi La De to take away Mao Mao the most.

“Lost child, awaken.” The voice full of such magnetism appeared again, releasing another wave of mysterious spirit waves. They were a particular frequency that it seemed like only Mao Mao could perceive. Her whole body shuddered, and she awoke from her stupor. After being stunned for a moment, she immediately locked her gaze on to Nian Bing. “Big Brother Nian Bing, you’re okay.” She ran over to Nian Bing and looked him up and down, her eyes full of concern. Her familiar naughtiness was nowhere to be seen. In this moment, it seemed that Mao Mao had grown up.

Nian Bing subconsciously patted Mao Mao’s head. With a smile, he said, “Relax, I’m fine. Just now, senior and I were just playing around.”

Mao Mao looked at her father with suspicion. Xi La De snorted coldly and said, “Looking at you, it seems that your father isn’t even as important as an outsider to you. Wait until we get home, and you and I will have words.”

Mao Mao blinked, giggling as she replied, “Daddy won’t do that. Daddy loves Mao Mao the most. I already know that I was wrong. If not, you can let Mommy punish me, okay.”

Xi La De laughed. “Her? If it weren’t for her pampering you like this, you wouldn’t be so naughty as to dare to run away from home.” The three people walked over to the side and found a clean

spot to sit down. Nian Bing specially picked up the musk gland that had been wrapped in cloth.

Mao Mao giggled and ran to the side. In just a moment, she had picked up the musk deer that had been roasted previously and ran back. “It’s still hot. Daddy, Big Brother Nian Bing, let’s eat together.”

Nian Bing took the musk deer. With a flick of his wrist, the Proud Sky Knife appeared. He took several clean tree leaves and spread it on the ground. A green light flashed in his hands, and piece after piece of musk deer flesh appeared neatly laid out on the leaves. “Senior, Mao Mao, this is a very remote place. You will have to make do with this to eat.”

At this moment, Mao Mao saw that her father seemed to no longer bear any enmity towards Nian Bing. Immediately relieved, she pinched off a piece of to place into her mouth without minding the oils of the musk deer.

Xi La De looked at Nian Bing and asked, “Who did you learn the Ice and Fire Source from? I’m considered to be quite knowledgeable about the realm of magic, but I have never heard of anyone of having this kind of legendary magic. Your magic power seems to be only that of a Great mage, but with the Ice and Fire Source, you can use magic with the power close to a magic scholar. If you hadn’t encountered a rare breed like the golden-backed land dragon, an ordinary magic beast definitely could not harm you.”

Nian Bing smiled indifferently and replied, “If I told you that my Ice and Fire Magic Source was something that I practiced just by

fumbling about, would you believe me?”

Xi La De's brows creased, but he soon nodded his head. He replied, “I believe you. The ancestor of the null people, the mighty saint summoner also used his own wisdom and great strength to create the profound magic of summoning, as well as the auxiliary spirit magic. Ice and Fire Source Magic must have existed before, otherwise it could not be just as legendary as summoning magic. You have been able to brush against the entrance of Ice and the Fire Source, which is a sign that it's fate. This is another important reason of why I didn't kill you.”

Nian Bing forced a smile. “But it hasn't been easy to cultivate this. No one has ever cultivated this magic before, so I can only rely on my feeling to figure things out, little by little. I'm still always on the alert because of the possibility for the two extremes of ice and fire elements exploding at any time. Right now, I'm still not clear whether what I'm practicing could be considered to be Ice and Fire Source Magic.”

Xi La De thought over this and replied, “It's not completely ice and fire source magic. Actually, I had arrived here when you were roasting the meat. I did not appear only because I saw you simultaneously using ice and fire magic to cook the musk deer. Afterwards, when you were facing off against the golden-backed land dragon, I discovered that although your Ice and Fire Source could employ the two kinds of mutually dominating magics to explode together and produce a stronger attack power, it was not true Ice and Fire Source. Because when the magic elements exploded together, you could completely preserve the properties of ice and fire. If not, even if it were the golden-backed land dragon with its super defense, it could not completely resist the attack of

the Ice and Fire magic source. Cold then hot or hot then cold is the best method to break through any defense. By expanding and contracting, your attack would have enough strength to break through the strongest defense. Kid, the road you will walk is long. Just like my ancestors, no one can truly help you. Everything relies on your hard work.”

“Daddy, aren’t you gonna eat some? It’s really savory! When we go back you have to make me things to eat, okay? If you have things that are delicious, I can guarantee I won’t sneak out again.” While speaking, she handed a portion of the musk deer meat to Xi La De.

Xi La De took the musk deer that his daughter had passed to him and put it in his mouth. By just chewing for a minute, shock appeared on his face. At this time, Nian Bing was thinking over what Xi La De had just said. It was like a wakeup call. So he could strengthen his magic attack power by using the Ice and Fire Source, he had to make these two sharply contrasting magic elements each display their own special properties. As such, it wouldn’t be just a simple addition of explosive power added to his attack; the properties of ice and fire would be completely shown.

A fire-red figure sneakily crept close near the three people. Mao Mao’s eyes flickered and discovered its presence. With ill-humor, she said, “Get over here, Na Na. Just now who knows where you were. Hmph, once you smelt the meat you came running back. You stupid fox, see how I’ll deal with you when we get home.” Her final sentence was learned from how her father had just spoken to her.

The fox Na Na lowered its head and walked next to Mao Mao,

saliva flowing out of the corner of its mouth. It looked at Mao Mao with a gluttonous plea.

Xi La De glanced at the fox and said, “Mao Mao, give it a bit to eat. It hasn’t evolved yet, so it isn’t equipped with the ability to attack. You shouldn’t blame it.” Hearing Xi La De’s words, the little fox actually nodded its head, wearing an indulgent expression.

Mao Mao snorted and said, “You little fickle thing. Since I spoil you normally, for punishment you are not permitted to drink Dan Dan’s milk for a month.” While saying this, she took a piece of meat that Nian Bing had cut and tossed it to the fox Na Na. Na Na did not care about punishment at this moment, and used her two front claws to cradle the musk deer meat as she gnawed it away. Under the effect of the Free Wind’s Gentle Hymn, the Proud Sky knife, the musk deer was reduced to bones. Nian Bing tossed the bones over to the fox, and got himself a piece of meat to eat.

Xi La De asked, “Nian Bing, your knife technique is extremely skillful. Could it be that you are a dual practitioner in martial arts?”

Nian Bing went blank for a moment and then replied with a smile. “No. The road I walk to cultivate magic is already so long, how could I dual cultivate martial arts? If it were like that, I would have no way of catching a glimpse of the peak of any kind of ability.”

Xi La de nodded his head in praise. “Pretty good. As such, the Ice and Fire Magic Source already will consume a great portion of your

concentration to research it. You don't want to be too complicated in your studies because of your intelligence as that has no advantage for you. The knife you just used should be a top-quality wind-attributed magic item. You also have that flame knife. Why would you use them to cut meat?"

Nian Bing smiled faintly and said, "Because they are not only my magic wands, but also my cooking knives! My true profession is that of a chef." At this time, he did not know why, but Nian Bing had a very favorable impression of Xi La De. Although Xi La De's face was always cold, his unaffected manner and expression made Nian Bing think of his own father.

"What? A chef? A great mage is a chef?" Xi La De looked at Nian Bing with disbelief.

Nian Bing smiled and said, "That's the truth. My cooking arts are much higher than my magical strength."

Xi La De grabbed another piece of musk deer meat and did not ask any further. He merely nodded his head in admiration and praised, "Truly, the flavor of the food that you make is pretty good."

Right at this moment, an intense ray of golden light attracted Nian Bing and the other two's attention. The golden light came from the direction where the golden-backed land dragon had been trapped by Xi La De's spirit magic.

Xi La De's expression changed slightly, seeming to be

contemplating something. Rapidly, a faint thread of happiness appeared in his eyes. “This is great. The golden-backed land dragon is actually a variant. You stay here and don’t move. A variant golden-backed land dragon is very frightening. I will go over there and come back. Mao Mao, haven’t you always wanted a strong pet? You will have one now.” While saying this, Xi La De waved his right hand. A red magic hexagram appeared before him and with a flash of red light, a large, green bird approximately three meters in height appeared in front of him. He directly straddled the bird and with a strange cry, the large, green bird immediately carried him aloft, in the direction of the golden light.

Nian Bing watched Xi La De’s chantless use of the summoning technique. He could not help but feel extremely jealous. If he had a summoned beast like that, then wouldn’t it be a lot easier to travel the continent?

“Big Brother Nian Bing, sorry.” Mao Mao suddenly lowered her head to Nian Bing.

Nian Bing was stunned and then asked, “Mao Mao, what’s wrong?”

Mao Mao still kept her head lowered. “I know that it was my fault, but can you forgive Mao Mao?”

Nian Bing smiled. “Silly girl. At my most dangerous moment, you ran back to save me. How could it still be a mistake? So what’s the real problem?”

Mao Mao said stubbornly, “You need to promise to forgive me first, and then I’ll tell you.”

Nian Bing laughed and replied, “Okay, no matter what happened I will forgive you, so tell me now.”

Mao Mao cast her attention to the fox Na Na who was still eating the musk deer on the ground and said, “That golden-backed land dragon was probably attracted by Na Na’s urine.”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “It seems that the power of your precious fox is not small! However, I had already guessed this earlier. That golden-backed land dragon should have been attracted by the scent of the urine, but then when it smelled the musk deer’s fragrance it started to pay attention to us. There’s nothing to it. Why would I be mad at you?”

Mao Mao raised her head to sneak a glance at Nian Bing and said in a low voice, “There’s another thing. Actually, land dragons are extremely gluttonous. Although it was very savage, if we had given it our musk deer, it wouldn’t have paid attention to us. I wanted to see how awesome Big Brother’s magic was, so I tricked you and said that it would definitely attack us. But, but I didn’t think that it was actually a golden-backed land dragon.” With these words, Mao Mao’s head lowered even further, like a girl waiting for her trial. The sight made people feel pity.

Nian Bing was somewhat bitter as he looked at Mao Mao. Now he understood that he had risked life and limb because of Mao Mao’s lie, but could he still blame Mao Mao? Sighing, he rubbed Mao Mao’s soft black hair. “Never mind about it. Just don’t ever play a

joke like that again, a joke with life and death! Mao Mao is a good kid, and Big Brother won't blame you."

Mao Mao's head snapped up, and her eyes flashed with relief. "Big Brother, you really don't blame Mao Mao?"

Nian Bing helplessly nodded but said in his mind: What's the use of blaming you. Things have already happened. Anyway, you little witch will leave here with your father soon. Why do I need to blame you?

Mao Mao cheered and threw herself into Nian Bing and kissed his face. "Big Brother is the best, Big Brother is the best."

The moment Mao Mao's body pressed into his embrace, Nian Bing discovered that Mao Mao was not a kid at all. Her soft, adorable body held a faint fragrance. Although she was not as slender as Feng Nu, under the cover of her large, damaged clothing, she could definitely be said to be a budding flower. He wanted to say something to cover his embarrassment, but the ground suddenly shook. Nian Bing and Mao Mao looked at the direction of the golden light only to see Xi La De riding the green bird in the air, his gaze fixated on the golden light below.

Chapter 37.2 – The Story Of The Dragon God

Nian Bing asked Mao Mao, “Do you know what’s going on? Don’t tell me that golden-backed land dragon did something else?”

Mao Mao pondered and then replied, “The iron-backed land dragon is already a very strong species. If it reaches one hundred years old, its body will strengthen. Upon reaching three hundred years, the iron-backed land dragon will evolve into a golden-backed land dragon. This is also my first time seeing it. Daddy said before that golden-backed land dragons were the kings of the earth. Besides the true, greater dragons, there are few organisms that can contend against it. No matter whether it be physical or magic defense, the golden-backed land dragon has reached the pinnacle of its form. However, our spirit magic is the nemesis of the earth king. From the way it looks now, it’s possible that the golden-backed land dragon was stimulated to evolve by Daddy’s spirit magic. Even I don’t know what it will evolve into. I think Daddy means to give me it as a pet to raise; it’s really too great.”

Nian Bing nodded his head, and couldn’t contain his interest. He whispered, “Stay here and don’t move. I’m going to go look.”

Mao Mao giggled and said, “It’s okay if you go. We’ll go together; anyway, it’s not far. With Daddy here, nothing can happen to us.”

Nian Bing looked at her and helplessly nodded. “Then you definitely must not call out and stay behind me and be careful.”

With a noise of agreement, Mao Mao set her fox Na Na on the

ground, and they walked in the direction of where the golden light had first appeared. As the two people looked at the place lit up by a golden light from behind a large tree, they indeed saw a golden-backed land dragon. However, it was currently undergoing a transformation. It was originally a very large creature, though it had shrunk a little right now. However, two lines of large protrusions burst out from its back. Its four limbs looked to have become thicker, and its entire body had turned completely gold. Its outer skin had become rigid, seeming like it was covered by a layer of golden scales. Its back fins had become longer than before, and moreover, they seemed to each be twisting together, forming a spear like spike. The spikes were about one meter in length. Upon careful counting, the twisted dorsal fins were nine in total, nine pikes extending from its back from the back of its neck to its tail. At the same time, its tail was also undergoing a change. The very long tail seemed to be bifurcating into nine sections, though it still had not reached completion at the moment.

Unending golden flames were spat out from the golden-backed land dragon's mouth, the scorching air charred the surrounding shrubbery. It seemed to be very excited; its eyes which had turned blood-red were looking all about. A golden aura surrounding its body formed a natural defensive layer that flickered in and out of view. Its live force seemed to be getting stronger.

“Grawr–” An angry roar came from the golden-backed land dragon. It snapped back its massive skull, spitting out a massive golden flame at Xi La De in the air.

Xi La De snorted coldly. The green bird brought him higher, dodging the golden flame. After spitting out a mouthful of the golden flame, the golden-backed land dragon appeared tired. It

lowered its head to gasp for breath, seeming to store more strength to attack Xi La De again. It was just too bad that Xi la De would not give it such an opportunity.

“By my life, by my blood I summon you, o noble Khaldrys! My companion! Show us your greatest power.” On the back of the green bird, he quickly bit his finger. With his blood, he drew a small hexagram. The instant the hexagram was completed, the bird he was riding suddenly trembled. Xi La De patted the green bird’s back and with a flash of light, it disappeared into thin air. Xi La De naturally began to fall to the ground.

Right at that moment, the surrounding air suddenly became heavier. The red hexagram Xi La De had drawn suddenly expanded, and the descent of Xi La De halted mid-air. A gigantic black shadow slowly started to emerge from the red hexagram. The clear and sunny skies suddenly filled with black clouds and the sound of a deep dragon cry resonated. The black clouds rolled in the sky, and the stagnated Xi La de was cradled by the black figure. Yes, it was a greater dragon, a emerald green greater dragon.

Nian Bing did not dare to believe his eyes and forcefully rubbed them. A dragon, a real dragon? Wasn’t it said that the dragon race had gone extinct in the warring era of ancient times? How could a dragon appear here? Heavens! Mao Mao’s father actually summoned a true dragon. The clouds begets the dragon’s arrival, this truly is the so-called dragon from clouds!

Yes, it was a true greater dragon. It was over twenty-three meters in length. With its massive dragon wings unfurled and bringing with it a haze. Atop its head were a pair of antlers, with whiskers

coming from the corner of its mouth. Below its forehead was a pearl, and its entire body was covered in green scales. Its limbs underneath its belly were thick and powerful. A single dragon claw was enough to grasp the head of the golden-backed land dragon. Its massive body twirled in the air. With its wings spread out and its claws extended, it descended to the ground. The strong wind blew over the surroundings. The entire body of the golden-backed land dragon covered in gold light suddenly trembled, and it raised its head at the green dragon and roared.

The dragon's cry sounded out again, and the green greater dragon seemed to be angrily roaring. The powerful golden-backed land dragon did not dare to disobey and raised its head. The green dragon descended, its four, powerful claws seizing onto the scales on the back of the golden-backed land dragon, while constantly roaring. The golden-backed land dragon seemed to be conversing with it as their voices began to weaken.

Xi La De slid off the green dragon's back onto the ground and looked at the golden-backed dragon up close. With a satisfied smile, he said, "Thank you, noble Khaldrhys. I will trouble you to bring him back."

The green greater dragon looked at him and nodded, and conversed in human speech. "For it to exist, he had to submit. I already promised it that in a hundred years, it will be permitted to join the dragon race."

The green dragon Khaldrhys nodded at Xi La De and roared a dragon roar at the sky. It shifted its sight towards where Nian Bing and Mao Mao were standing. "Little Mao Mao, you have to listen to

what your father says. If not, Uncle Dragon will spank your little butt.”

In the face of the green greater dragon, Mao Mao was not scared at all. She skipped out from behind the tree and giggled. “Uncle Dragon don’t hit me, I’m going back with Daddy. However, you should let Mao Mao play with your feelers. I heard people say that dragon whiskers can whip rock into dust.”

The green greater dragon gave a low rumble. Its massive head dangled down strengthless, and helplessly said, “You girl, you’re getting more audacious by the day! Okay, I will go. When you get back let your dad spank your butt.” Although its words were rebuking, its tone did not contain any real intention of scolding. Its powerful wings flapped making Xi La De take several steps backwards. With a flap of its wings it was aloft, bringing the golden-backed land dragon with it. Into the air they flew, and in a moment, they had pierced through the cloud cover. The clouds gradually dissipated and the green greater dragon Khaldrhys had disappeared.

Nian Bing stood there, seemingly pondering over something. Suddenly, he flicked his wrist, and the Proud Sky knife that was in his hand chopped at a tree next to him. With the acceleration of the wind, Proud Sky met almost no resistance as it sliced into the tree. The green light sparked again, and the knife returned to Nian Bing’s hand. The tree had fallen. A piece cut into a third of a meter long with a diameter of about one third of a meter fell into Nian Bing’s hand. His attention seemed to be completely immersed in the tree trunk, not even noticing when Xi La De and his daughter came over next to him.

Mao Mao was just about to speak to Nian Bing when she was stopped by Xi La De. He said to his daughter quietly, “Do not bother him. He seems to be comprehending something.”

The green light flashed like lightning, and the bark was all peeled away. Nian Bing’s wrist flicked, sending the Proud Sky Knife back into his space. The next instant, Demonic Engraving had appeared in his hands. The veiny pattern of the tree trunk had been completely exposed. He cut down with a ghostly blue light twinkling around his hands. Wood shavings were sent flying as Nian Bing chanted softly, “The demonic hand fell on the transformation of the startled sky. The carving billowed hundreds of turns. The work of god exists in eternity. The blade reflects a fragment of the moon in the cold spring.” His movements seemed very slow but were very elegant. The ghostly blue light wrap around the wood block in a mist. But Xi La De, who was exceptionally strong in spirit power, could clearly see that every wave of the dream-like mist was actually at least ten rays of light cutting at the wood.

Finally, the ghostly blue light disappeared, and Demonic Engraving lay passively in Nian Bing’s hands. In his other hand was his just finished work, a dragon. A dragon that looked exactly the same as Khaldrhys. Even the dragon scales did not have any differences. It captured the action of Khaldrhys pouncing with its four claws outstretched. Its massive wings were completely unfurled. The carving’s most exquisite aspect was the green dragon Khaldrhys’ eyes. It seemed that even in the carving they held an expression. If it were not for that fact that the carving was not alive, it would simply be a miniature version of the green greater dragon with a spirit!

“The Demonic Engraving God Knife is a good knife. For your knife arts to have reached this realm, I believe that you are a chef.” There wasn’t anything in this word that Xi La De hadn’t seen, but still he could not help but praise Nian Bing for his masterful work.

Nian Bing’s mind returned, and he replied with some embarrassment, “I am sorry. Because when I learned culinary arts, the figure I was most proficient at carving was a dragon, but I felt that even though my carvings had the shape of the dragon, they lacked its true essence. When I saw senior summon the greater dragon before, I was unable to hold back my excitement and carved this.

Xi La De walked over to Nian Bing and said with praise, “It was just a short period of time. You were really able to capture Khaldrhys’ essence. I can see that you hold some accomplishments in the area of spiritual power.”

Nian Bing gave the wooden dragon carving he was holding to Ma Mao who wore a face full of curiosity. “Since you are going home, this is Big Brother’s present to you.”

Mao Mao took the wooden dragon with excitement. “Fantastic. Big Brother, so you had this kind of talent.”

Nian Bing smiled and replied, “I have another gift. Although you might not necessarily have a use for it, it’ll be good for you to bring it with you.” While saying this, he pulled out the two teeth from the musk deer from before. Demonic Engraving flashed, and the teeth were immediately hollowed out. He carefully stuffed the musk gland into the teeth and then passed them to Mao Mao.

“When you get back, make sure to stop them up with wax. If you ever have a wound that breaks skin, you can rub the musk deer teeth after they have turned yellow onto your wound and it will not get infected. If you are bitten by a poisonous insect, if you use the musk deer teeth around the wound then the poison will not spread. But you need to remember that the musk deer teeth must turn yellow before they have this kind of property. Musk deer teeth will also emit a faint fragrance that I think you will like.”

Mao Mao looked at the 5 inch deer teeth in her hands. Her eyes were filled with emotion. “Big Brother, why are you so good to Mao Mao! Mao Mao likes your presents very much.”

Nian Bing smiled faintly. “You called me big brother a lot; don’t wear it out! Big Brother doesn’t have many nice things, so I can only give you these.”

Xi La De smiled. “It looks that your fortune was pretty good. Na Na is no doubt a fox that attracts treasures. Although its urine smells terrible, it can attract rare creatures. This musk deer teeth, once it’s finished, will sell for more than fifty purple-gold coins, but they are rare on the market.”

It was the first time that Nian Bing had seen Xi La De’s face with a genial smile. At this moment, he was not the cold summoner, but more like a senior. Just when he thought that Xi La De was going to leave with Mao Mao, he instead pulled Mao Mao over to the side where they had come from to sit down. He waved Nian Bing over, saying, “Do you want to hear about the story related to that golden-backed land dragon?”

With his curiosity piqued, Nian Bing walked over next to Xi La De and his daughter and sat down. Xi La De continued speaking, “Even I did not think that you would run into a thousand-year-old land dragon. In all of the writings on the continent, the creatures known as dragons were only written down as legends. But in fact, although dragons are strong, they are still just a species on this continent. It’s just that they are the strongest species. Thousands of years ago, in the time of an ancient war, the continent possessed over a thousand greater dragons. At that time, countries also possessed dragon warriors which they held as their pride since dragons represented strength. Whichever side held the more greater dragon warriors, the chances of victory would be tipped in their favor. But with the passage of time, the numbers of the dragon race dwindled. Although they were the strongest race, it was difficult for them to raise an offspring, especially to incubate an egg. They became increasingly rarer, and greater dragons become more precious. The dragons are a prideful race, and they definitely would not ask for help from humans as they believed that humans were selfishness incarnate. The reason why they assisted mankind in war was actually because they wanted to learn how to learn how to reproduce faster from humans and strengthen their own reproduction capability. But after the war, they disappeared. After all, dragons are not humans. Their body composition is too different and is unable to sustain that fast breeding rate of mankind. When the greater dragons numbered no more than one hundred, the dragon king then knew that its own species would go extinct. Helpless, it only could use its own life to used the strongest Dragontongue spell to ask the dragon god to save them. Just as the ceremony was drawing to a close, the dragon king’s Dragontongue spell was suddenly interrupted. A selfish greater dragon who desired the dragon king’s position attacked. At that time, my ancestor who had good relations with the dragon race paid with his own life, burning all of his spiritual power to block that greater dragon, just managing to let the dragon

king complete a Dragontongue forbidden spell—the Dragon God’s Prayer.”

Chapter 38.1 – The Mercenary Association

Having said this, Xi La De's eyes couldn't help but show a sorrowful expression. With a soft sigh, he continued to speak, "The Dragon God truly descended. As one of the main gods, the Dragon God's first task was to punish the traitor to the dragon race. At the same time, it ordered the dragon king to lead the dragon race to follow it back into the divine realm, to forever become members of the divine realm. But the dragon king refused to let go of the dragon race that had existed on the Yang Guang continent for thousands of years. With its request, the dragon god permitted one of each attribute of greater dragon to remain living on the continent, but they could no longer participate in wars on the continent. Because my ancestor had saved the dragon race, the dragon god specially bestowed upon us the title 'Guardian of the Dragons'. It permitted one of the most outstanding of the kinsmen in a generation to sign an equal contract with one of the greater dragons remaining on the continent and to also keep watch over the remaining seven greater dragons remaining on the continent.

"When it came to my generation, I signed a contract with the wind divine dragon you saw just now, Khaldrhys. As a mature greater dragon, it is already over five thousand years in age. From a human's point of view, it is almost impossible to defeat. Except for descended god spells or peak martial god qi, nothing can wound it. The seven attributed greater dragon each reside in a different corner of the Yang Guang continent. Besides themselves, know one knows the whereabouts of other greater dragons. The dragon god did not assign them any things to do, so on the continent, besides not being able to participate in wars, they are completely free."

"Daddy, I know all this already! Get to the important part." Mao Mao urged impatiently.

Nian Bing's heart was like a mirror. He knew that Xi La De told him these secrets to repay the present he had given to Mao Mao. To him, these histories were especially precious. When he heard Mao Mao interrupt Xi La De, he quickly said, "Mao Mao, behave. Do not interrupt; let Senior finish speaking."

What was strange that Mao Mao, who normally would not even listen to what her parents said, actually closed her mouth obediently at Nian Bing's words. Not only did she not talk again, but there wasn't even a hint of dissatisfaction in her expression.

Xi La De's eyes contained a profound smile. He continued to speak, "Then I will go right away to the topic at hand. In our continent, there are very many different systems of belief. There are some who believe that dragons are the strongest beings, and they themselves make up the dragon people race. To outsiders, they call themselves dragonkin. They take the remaining greater dragons on the continent as their totem and strive to cultivate themselves, hoping that one day they can obtain the acknowledgement of the greater dragon. From what I know, the greater dragons are quite passive, but they harbor an intense disgust towards humans. Up until now, there are very few of the dragonkin who have truly obtained the acknowledgement of a greater dragon, just as the totem of the phoenix clan is a phoenix. Greater dragons are incredibly valuable.

"There are also people who believe the exact opposite of the dragonkin. They are called the Dragon Slaughter Warriors, but there can only be very few of these people. Not to mention that they haven't even found any greater dragons, but only the dragonkin could make them look good."

Nian Bing was somewhat doubtful when he spoke. “Senior, could it be that greater dragons are truly only vulnerable to god-descended spells and martial god divine qi? If it’s like that, then if greater dragons wanted to cause harm to humans, the legendary dragon god wouldn’t care, and as a result wouldn’t mankind suffer a calamity?”

Xi La De laughed and replied, “In theory that is very possible, but the actual chance of it happening is very small. Although dragons are powerful, they do have their own weak points. If you have less than the strength necessary to battle a dragon, it’s possible to just go find a dragon-slaying weapon and you can succeed. However, dragon-slaying weapons are extremely uncommon, as that kind of item belongs to the curse magic items class and are almost completely nonexistent. Okay, that’s all the information we need. Regarding the golden-backed land dragon, I don’t know if you were out of luck or had too good luck, but the golden-backed land dragon that was attracted by Na Na today is not only an evolved form of the iron-backed land dragon, but a golden-backed land dragon king. I learned from my spiritual exchange with Khaldrhys, that this golden-backed land dragon king is over a thousand years old. An ordinary land dragon can’t live longer than two hundred years and if it has a special opportunity, it can evolve to live to over three hundred years. Then there is a twenty percent chance it can evolve into a golden-backed land dragon king. Whether it’s in attack or defense, the golden-backed land dragon are far above ordinary iron-backed land dragons. This is why your Ice and Fire Magic Source couldn’t injure it.

“Golden-backed land dragons can normally live for five hundred years. The one you saw just now definitely ate some heavenly treasure of a spirit medicine, or it somehow used its low

intelligence to comprehend a gateway to cultivation. For it to actually have lived over a thousand years, it must definitely be a golden-backed land dragon king. Perhaps you felt that it was not that strong. That was because you did not battle it head on. It possesses such ability that an entire thousand person heavy cavalry definitely can not fight against it, but its weakness is that it cannot fly, and it has an innate fear towards things that are flying. So it's amazing that you could hold out against it for that long."

Nian Bing asked, "When it was changing appearance, Mao Mao called it an evolution? What sort of special characteristics does a golden-backed land dragon king have after it evolves?"

Xi La De said, "There is a saying passed down from ancient times that you might've heard of. It is, 'An encounter with chance may change the worthless golden scaled fish into a dragon.' This is saying that a fish can possess the bloodlines of the dragon race. This fish, if it can grasp the opportunity to accumulate the dragon bloodlines within itself, by the energy of heaven and earth it can remove the impurities from its body and can become a true divine dragon. The golden-backed land dragon king you saw just now was in that situation. On the continent, there are many organisms who possess a small portion of dragon bloodlines; this species of land dragon is just one of them. But I never expected that this land dragon lived up to one thousand years old. Underneath my spiritual magic prison, it entered into the final stage of becoming a dragon. The changes you saw were the process of it becoming a dragon.

"But whether it can become a true dragon is yet unknown. I summoned Khaldrhys not to deal with it, but to help it become a true divine dragon. By admitting loyalty to Khaldrhys, it can

obtain the assistance of a true divine dragon so that its evolution will become perfect. In case it becomes a divine dragon, it's no longer part of the scope of land dragons. To find out what attributes it will possess will be seen after the evolution is completed. The evolution process might take at least a year. I told Khaldrhys to tell it that if it pledged to serve our clan for a hundred years, we would help it become a dragon and formally enter the ranks of the dragon race. With no other alternative, it could only agree. Based on its tale dividing into nine and the spear-shaped fins on its back, I am thinking about it calling it the nine-speared dragon. I want it to sign a contract with Mao Mao, so that girl can run around, and I won't have to worry."

"Daddy is the bestest of all daddies." Mao Mao was ecstatic, embracing XI La De's neck and bestowing a kiss on his face.

Xi La De deliberately schooled his facial expression and said, "Don't be too pleased with yourself. Do you even have the spirit power to make a contract with a divine dragon? If you want to become a dragon summoner, then when you go back you will have to cultivate spirit magic with me. If you cannot grasp onto this opportunity, then you will no longer be called my, Xi La De's, daughter."

Looking at her father's stern demeanor, Mao Mao giggled and stuck out her adorable little tongue. "I know; I will go back and cultivate hard. Daddy, can we bring Nian Bing back with us? The food he makes are really tasty. Mao Mao is lonely all by herself. If I have Nian Bing with me, then I guarantee I will not run off."

Hearing Mao Mao's words, XI La De's face could not help but

undergo a great change. This time, he seemed to be really mad. A strict voice said, “You haven’t been fooling around enough? So you dare try to bargain with me. Little Qing.” A red light flashed and that green, large bird appeared in the air once again. Through an exchange via spirit power, it understood Xi La De’s intentions. It lowered itself and supported Mao Mao on its back.

Mao Mao eyes were rimmed red. “Daddy is so bad, so cruel. Big Brother Nian Bing, it seems that we will really be parting. I will leave you with one of the musk deer teeth. When you look at it, then you will think of Mao Mao. Relax, Mao Mao will definitely not come looking for you.” While saying this, she tossed the musk deer tooth to Nian Bing.

Xi La De’s eyebrows crinkled and his eyes were filled with a cold light. The large green bird immediately flapped its wings and flew away with Mao Mao.

Nian Bing said, “Senior, Mao Mao is still a kid. She just craves to play a bit. Don’t blame her.”

Seeing the gradual ascent of the green bird, Xi La De’s eyes held a hint of concern. “Honestly speaking, killing you right here is the best option. But I have already spoken, so consider yourself lucky.”

Nian Bing was blank for a moment. Seeing Xi La De’s face that had changed so suddenly, he did not quite understand his meaning. “Senior, you.....”

Xi La De snorted coldly, saying, “I hope that you will never meet

my daughter again. If not, the next time you see each other I will not let you off so lightly. We are null people, and can only marry null people to preserve the purity of our bloodlines. Especially my daughter. If she does not marry a null person, then how can the divine dragon protector be inherited?”

Hearing this, Nian Bing did not know whether to laugh or cry. “Senior, I think you are mistaken. Did I not say before that Mao Mao and I had only known each other for a few hours? I only see her as a little sister; it wasn’t possible for anything to happen!”

Xi La De’s eyes exuded a profound light. “I understand my daughter the best. You may regard her as a little sister, but she, who does not understand the relationship between men and women, has taken you as her older brother. But everything that you have done has left her with a profound impression. From now on, who can say what will happen? Mark my words. If you want to further develop the Ice and Fire Source magic, if you want to live peacefully, then never have any relationship with my daughter.” Just as he said those last few words, Nian Bing felt an intense spiritual power rage through him. A biting pain exploded from his brain. His whole body shuddered, and he immediately lost consciousness.

When Nian Bing came to, his surroundings had fallen dark. A feeling of weakness came from a dizziness that was making his brain fuzzy. Concentrating his attention, he recalled everything that had happened after he had lost consciousness, which, up till now, he still kind of could not believe it. Observing his surroundings, he could only see the leftover roasted musk deer meat here. It seemed that everything was true. Mao Mao’s father was actually that strong of an existence. He couldn’t help but find

it hard to understand why the girls he met after leaving Peach Blossom Forest had fathers that were each stronger than the last? A summoner who could summon a divine dragon, perhaps even his own newly minted teacher Long Zhi could not be his match. After all, without the strength of a descended god, spells could not harm a greater dragon. It seems that the path he had to walk to avenge his father and mother was very, very long.

He used both hands to prop up himself and walked over to sit on a tree to the side. Although Mao Mao and her father had brought Nian Bing not just a little bit of trouble, as well as danger, the tales about dragons from the summoner Xi La De made him very interested. Currently, Nian Bing somewhat envied null people. If he could summon a dragon, then what would be the point of practicing magic?

Forcefully casting such fanciful ideas from his brain, Nian Bing opened his space ring and took out three of his few magic scrolls. He spread them out in front of him and used a simple trigger magic array to fuse them together. Although they were only rank 4 scrolls, they were able to deal with an ordinary wild beast. As long as it wasn't some kind of land dragon, there would be no problem.

These scrolls could eliminate the need to chant the spell. They were extremely convenient. Nian Bing had just calculated the cost of all the scrolls he had used earlier, and just wanted to throttle himself for acting. How many purple-gold coins was that! Never mind, anyways he would have to make less scrolls later. To rely on these might slow down the speed of his magic increase dramatically.

Just as his mood had gradually calmed, Nian Bing shut his eyes, sensing the magic element in the air round him. He entered a state of meditation. The most important thing now was no doubt to recover his strength. With Mao Mao gone, he could recover freely. Although it was lonely alone, Nian Bing really liked being alone.

With the help from the Flame God's Stone and the Ice and Snow Goddess' Stone, a night of meditation had recovered eighty percent of Nian Bing's Ice and Fire Source, and it wouldn't be long till he recovered fully. For the scrolls that he had used, he did not have any means of replenishment right now. He could only by blank scrolls in a big city and create some more. It was a shame that he had given not just a little money to Mao Mao. He might have to buy the most plain white scrolls, then he would buy some low-rank magic scrolls and sell them and then buy better ones.

After using a simple Flame spell to roast the leftover musk deer to eating, and eating a block of ice with the ice spell, Nian Bing once again returned to tread along the road.

Walking alone was probably quite lonely for an ordinary person, but there wouldn't be anything that happened to Nian Bing's body. After confirming the direction he walked while recalling the magic knowledge he had memorized in the library. Using his own style to try to comprehend, the road was not lonely at all.

Chapter 38.2 – The Mercenary Association

It was already September. The air that had once been scorching hot simmered to a cool. Autumn was the season of harvest. Besides the vegetation that grew along the road, the fields were filled with the crops planted by ordinary citizens. Under the radiance of the sun, the air became even more refreshing. Although the brilliance of the sun was strong, when walking in the shade, it was both refreshing and comfortable.

Ice Orchid City was a large city straddling the border between the Ice Moon Empire and the Proud Orchid Empire. It was one of the most eccentric cities in all of the Yang Guang continent as the city was two-thirds in the Ice Moon Empire and one-third in the Proud Orchid Empire. When the territory was being planned out, it was unknown how the city would be divided. Fortunately, the relationship between the Ice Moon Empire and the Proud Orchid Empire was good. The city was under the jurisdiction of the Ice Moon Empire, but an annual tax was paid to the Proud Orchid Empire.

Due to the Ice Orchid City being split between the lands of two large empires, it was the biggest hub for exchange and commerce. The city was on par with the size of Ice Moon Empire's second biggest city, Ice and Snow City, and was even busier than Ice and Snow. The people of the Proud Orchid Empire and the Ice and Moon Empire moved without end throughout the city. One of the biggest groups there were merchants. The Ice and Moon Empire and the Proud Orchid Empire have trade relationships, and smart business men would buy and sell goods from both countries so that they could reap the greatest profits. Where there are merchants, there will naturally be quite a number of these types of people: mercenaries. In order to maximize profits, merchants had to

transport their goods a very long way. So they employed mercenaries for protection. They had become absolutely necessary. After all, what merchant would desire for their wares that they had painstakingly gathered to face troubles on the road.

Mages had their mage association, while the mercenaries also had their own mercenary association, except it was not as refined as the mage association. . In the eyes of ordinary people, it was a place where warriors gathered. You could take on any number of tasks from the mercenary association; each task had a different rank and would be rewarded accordingly. There were very few special martial artists among the mercenaries. After all, if a martial artist reached a certain level, why would they need to work as a mercenary? There were many better alternatives awaiting them.

The mercenary association of Ice Orchid City was located on the most northern side of the city, quite close to the city gates. It wasn't a very tall building, but it occupied a wide swathe of land. The main hall of the association approached thousands of meters in breadth. At the present time, there were at least seven, eight hundred mercenaries gathered there. There were some who took on tasks on their own, and there were some who took tasks on in mercenary groups. But their goal was the same: to make money. If they could find a simple task that was easy to complete, then that mercenary would be satisfied for a while.

Of course, not all of mercenaries were there to earn money. These kinds of people, although rare, were really there because their goal was to travel or because they liked adventure. Although they were few in number, these few people were the strongest among the mercenaries.

“I saw this task first. Do you think that your Orchid Fire Mercenary Group can bully other people and steal it away?” The angry voice belonged to a mercenary whose stature was not tall, but his body was like a very large ball. His voice was disproportionate to the size of his body and seemed to fill the entire hall. In a single moment, the mercenaries, who enjoyed commotion, immediately cast differing gazes his way. The chubby figure was somewhat comical. Simply put, his entire body was like a lump of flesh shaped into a meatball. He was plump everywhere, and his expansive clothing did not look like a warrior’s clothes. On his chest was an emblem of a white shield with two crossed swords.. This was the symbol of the mercenary, but he was just an ordinary fourth rank mercenary.

Mercenary ranks in descending order were special rank, first rank, second rank, third rank, fourth rank, fifth rank, and probationary mercenaries. Their emblems were identical, a shield with two crossed longswords, but they were colored differently according to rank. In descending order, badge colors were separated into gold, silver, scarlet, purple, yellow, white, blue and grey (the color of the metal).

“You’re being bullied, is that how it is? Shorty rubber ball, roll along home. How could trash like you complete this task? You wouldn’t even make it halfway before getting eaten up.” A tall mercenary wearing blue warrior’s clothing spoke. From his appearance, he looked a lot more like a mercenary.

The short and fat mercenary shivered. “You, you dare. This is the mercenary association, not your Orchid Fire Mercenary Group. What gives you the right to rob the task that I have accepted? The association deals in justice, right, beautiful miss?” While talking,

his gaze fell on the miss in charge of the desk at the mercenary association.

In the large hall, there were at least thirty or so desks responsible for assigning tasks. Behind the desks was a large blackboard, where every kind of task of any rank as well as their requirements were written. No matter which desk it was, you could take on tasks there. If a task was not taken on by anyone for three months, and the employer had no desire of abandoning it, the rank of the task would automatically increase. The ranking for mercenaries and tasks were the same, but that's not to say that a third rank mercenary could definitely complete a third rank task. For tasks of the same rank, the degrees of difficulty were close but not exactly the same.

The young lady who was in charge of the desk looked to be twenty-five, twenty-six years in age. Her appearance was ordinary, but her clothes outlined her pretty figure, exposing her well-developed body. She looked at the short fatty with irritation. "The Association will naturally be fair, but although you just took on this task, you were dithering around for a while and did not make the final confirmation. Thus, the Orchid Fire Mercenary Group is not taking advantage of others. Honestly speaking, with your fourth rank as a mercenary, it will be too difficult for you to complete this third rank task. Please do not make a disturbance here and leave. If the Orchid Fire Mercenary Group could please finish the registering procedures."

"Utter nonsense. Obviously I took on the task first. You bitch, you are definitely his mistress. Fuck, today I, your daddy, was not able to take this task." The short fatty's face was flushed red from anger. His right hand forcefully slapped the desk, emitting a loud

sound.

The Orchid Fire Mercenary Group member wore a yellow insignia, signifying he was a third rank mercenary. He extended his palm-like hand and pushed on the short fatty's shoulder. "Since you made a disturbance, just get out. Don't interfere with my registration."

The short fatty slapped away his hand. "Get out, this is my task."

Mercenaries were a mix of dragons and snakes. When the member of the Orchid Fire Mercenary Group saw that the other had a lower rank than him but was still boasting, the atmosphere immediately got heavier. "What? You want to fight? I will stick you like the fat pig you are."

The young miss in charge of the desk snorted and said, "If you want to fight, go outside to fight. If not, I will call the guards."

When the boastful fatty and the harsh faced Orchid Fire Mercenary Group member heard the word "guards," their facial expression immediately changed. The fatty cursed in a low voice and embarrassedly squeezed through the crowd to leave, while that member of the Orchid Fire Mercenary Group started to register for the task.

A mercenary's rank was determined according to the difficulty of tasks completed and the quantity resolved. So even a third rank mercenary could have the strength of an advanced warrior. The majority were just plain warriors, but the guards employed by the

mercenary association possessed at least the strength of an advanced warrior. They also didn't have a shortage of experts at the swordmaster rank. Those who dare to make a disturbance here would definitely think twice. With a move from the guards, tendons would be snapped and bones broken easily. So even though the mercenaries were often in conflicts, they did not dare to provoke an association guard.

Seeing as the disturbance was over, the mercenaries that had gathered each went back to doing their own thing. The young miss in-charge snorted. She didn't know how many times she had seen such a situation. Grabbing the pen on the table, she very slowly affirmed the registration from the manly man from the Orchid Fire Mercenary Group.

"Excuse me, are there any tasks here asking to sell high-level magic scrolls?" A cool and clear voice came from in front of the desk.

The lady in charge had finished signing the registration and passed the registration plaque to the Orchid Fire Mercenary Corps member. At the same time, she said with irritation, "Can you not read what tasks there are? Why are you even asking?" While saying this, she raised her head. When she actually saw the person making the inquiry, her eyes that had been full of irritation immediately sparkled. It seemed like there were heart shapes in her eyes.

Standing in front of the counter was a tall man. His body type was not as exaggeratedly thick as the man from the Orchid Fire Mercenary Group, but was slender and well-proportioned. A head

of long, golden hair draped behind him, and his eyes, which were as deep blue as the ocean, exuded an aura of wisdom. He looked to be around twenty years of age. His handsomeness could almost make a woman jealous. When he heard what the young lady in-charge had said, he could not help but crease his brows. His eyes swept over the blackboard in the back.

The young miss coughed and managed to tamp down her excitement. “Mister, did you come to take on a task?”

The golden-haired youth was indeed Nian Bing. When he heard her talk, his gaze fell on the face of the young miss in charge. Nodding his head, he said, “Yes, I wanted to see if there was a task for selling rank 5 magic scrolls and up.” After ten days of travelling and occasionally flying on a Snowstorm, Nian Bing had finally arrived at the city straddling the border between the Ice Moon Empire and the Proud Orchid Empire. When he had entered the city, his first order of business was to buy a detailed map of the continent. In these ten days, if he had not relied on flying and asking around to find the correct road, he did not know how many roads he could have gotten lost on.

Just as he arrived in Ice Orchid City, Nian Bing first wanted to replenish his quantity of magic scrolls. After counting, he only had twenty or so purple-gold coins on him. It was enough to buy ordinary blank scrolls, but if he wanted to make his dual magic trigger scrolls with the effects of the Ice and Fire Source, he needed to use the best scroll available to have a good success rate. He obviously did not have enough money on him, so he wanted to sell some scrolls to make some money. Of course, he looked for a branch of the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association, but regretfully, due to the fact the Ice Orchid City bordered Proud Orchid Empire,

there was no mage branch here. Of course, the fact that there was none here had to do with the fact that the strength of the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association was on a decline.

Faced with no other choice, he could only go to magic shops to try and sell his scrolls, but due to the fact that his scrolls and ordinary magic scrolls were not the same, he would only open the rank 4 to 6 scrolls, but would not activate them to show the might of the special scrolls. He naturally could not let people test the goods. Some were not special scrolls, but were fusion magic scrolls. How could those magic merchants understand the arrays drawn on them? Nian Bing wanted to use a scroll to display his strength, but the scroll's price was too high. He really was not willing to part with them. After a time, he entered an embarrassing situation. After switching between many shops, the answer was still the same. Finally, a kind-hearted shopkeeper pointed him to the mercenary association to test his luck. If there was a task about buying magic scrolls, he would not have to worry about the scrolls not being bought. The buyer would probably pay money to test the strength of the scrolls. Without any other choice, Nian Bing asked around for the way there and finally arrive here, hoping to meet a suitable task.

Nian Bing saw the entire scene before. As a result, the low-calibre mercenaries left him with a poor first impression.

The young miss in charge looked at the handsome Nian Bing's face and smiled. Under his gaze, her cheeks blossomed pink like peaches. Too handsome, really too handsome. "Mister, could I trouble to wait for a moment. I will go and look up for you. My name is Ma Rui and I am very happy to be of service to you."

“Oh, so this is the face of a girl in love! Ma Rui is so lecherous today. I never have received this kind of treatment!” From the side, a forty-plus year old third rank eccentric mercenary spoke.

Every day, Ma Rui came to this place of dragons and snakes mixed together. She had seen much of the world. With a snort, she said, “Get out of here and stop flapping your mouth while I’m here. If you have the ability, become a first rank mercenary, and I will find tasks for you.”

The forty-plus middle-aged man’s gaze fell on Nian Bing. “Don’t tell me that he is a first rank mercenary? I don’t see it.”

Nian Bing cast a gaze of irritation at the person next to him. The other’s face was looking at him with an indecent smile. He did not bother with these kinds of people, and returned his line of sight to Ma Rui.

The middle-aged man looked at Nian Bing’s quiet response and grabbed his shoulder and became more intense. “Young fellow, from your appearance, you must definitely be a prostitute. I haven’t seen you before here. Don’t tell me that business isn’t good, so you came here to sell yourself to women? Ma Rui is not a bad choice. Her figure is definitely very stimulating! However, her job might not be enough for you. If you want I can introduce you to some better prospects. The noble ladies of the city like effeminate boys like you. Ai, the heavens are truly not fair! Why is that I cannot have been a bit more handsome? Young fellow, your mother definitely is very beautiful. Hehe.” His lascivious laugh immediately made the surrounding mercenaries roar with laughter.

Chapter 39.1 – Magic Scrolls Transaction

Nian Bing was a smart person, and after experiencing all that had happened at Ice Snow City, he definitely didn't want to stir up any trouble. If the other person had just humiliated him, he would, at most, regard them as a despised housefly. However, that middle-aged man dared to insult his mother, his most painful wound. In an instant, Nian Bing's expression had changed, but the smile was still on his face.

The middle-aged man suddenly felt a chill run through his body, an icy cold clenching his heart without a cause. "What the fuck are you smiling at." To conceal the rising fear in his heart, he removed his hand from Nian Bing's shoulder.

"Fuck you." A hazy blue light flashed, and blood spewed everywhere. The mercenary association echoed with the ear-piercing squeal of a pig being slaughtered.

A twitching hand fell to the ground. It was the middle-aged man who shrieked, holding a stump where blood was spurting out wildly. His face had paled, and his legs weakened. He immediately tumbled to the ground while shrieking.

Nian Bing kicked the severed hand to the side, then looked at Ma Rui as if nothing had happened. In a head-on confrontation, Nian Bing could not defeat a third rank mercenary, but his knife was too quick. For many years, his hand and Demonic Engraving had achieved unity. With his lightning-like knife skills and the sharpness of his blade, he could accomplish many things when he caught people off guard.

Silence. Abnormal silence. The entire mercenary association had been sucked into a deathly still. The cold and cruel move had completely intimidated the entire hall. Ma Rui watched the handsome man in front of her dumbstruck with her hands trembling.

With a soft voice, Nian Bing, reminded Ma Rui, “Miss, please continue looking for me. Thank you.”

His gentle voice seemed very clear in the hall. Just now, almost no one had seen what he had done. They only saw a small knife appear in his right hand that was being twirled between his fingertips.

“You, how could you harm someone in the association?” Ma Rui’s voice was clearly trembling.

Nian Bing’s face showed a rascally smile. “I harmed someone? Did you truly witness it?”

Ma Rui was shocked for a moment. Her heart couldn’t believe what Nian Bing had just did, but the facts were laid before her eyes. Nian Bing’s smile made her heart feel very cold. The cold was like frost encasing her heart. It seemed that the person in front of her was not a handsome youth, but a devil, a murderous devil. “Come here, guards, get over here.” Ma Rui hysterically shouted, the fear in heart made her retreat backwards. Tripping over the chair leg, she fell to the ground.

Nian Bing creased his brows and shifted his sight at the middle-aged man with a severed hand. No doubt he was a third rank mercenary; he knew something about treating wounds. But at the moment, he was desperately clutching his wrist, trying to prevent further blood loss.

The mercenary crowd automatically parted, and three guards wearing black warrior clothing walked in. When they saw the situation, the three people's faces simultaneously changed. The leader of the three, a thirty-plus-year-old warrior wrinkled his brows at Nian Bing. "I am the captain of the guard here. Did you do this?"

Nian Bing smiled, but did not answer his query. Instead he knelt by the body and asked the middle-aged man with the severed hand, "Was I the one who cut off your hand?" His smile was gentle, but just like Ma Rui, the middle-aged man saw the smile of a devil. His entire body shook, and due to the blood he had lost, his pale face took on a green tinge. He desperately shook his head. "No, no, no, no."

Nian Bing stood up and looked at the guard captain with a provoking expression. "He's lying. It was really me who did it, because he insulted my mother." His left foot fiercely took one step forward, and with his full strength, he swung his right leg in a circle, kicking that forty-plus middle-aged man in the face. At this moment, the middle-aged man didn't have enough time to scream. Under a drizzle of blood, he lost consciousness.

The guard captain didn't block Nian Bing, but his expression became colder. "Young man, you are very arrogant. You need to

understand what kind of place you are in.”

Nian Bing smiled indifferently and replied, “I know what this place is. Isn’t this the mercenary association?”

The guard captain snorted coldly. “I will reclaim the honor on behalf of this mercenary.”

Nian Bing pointed at the passed out middle-aged man with his index finger. “People like him have honor?”

White qi was emitted by the guard captain. The ability to use qi confirmed that he had entered the swordmaster realm. It appeared that the strength of this guard captain wasn’t any worse than Xue Jing’s.

“You will become the same as him.” With a lift of his hand, the surrounding mercenaries cleared a space for them.

Nian Bing shook his head at the guard captain and extended his hand. A fireball immediately appeared in his palm. “Since you have confidence in yourself, then come. However, I cannot guarantee that no one will get accidentally hurt.”

Looking at the flame in Nian Bing’s hand, the guard captain’s expression immediately changed. Surprised, he asked, “You are a mage?”

Nian Bing smiled thinly. “To say precisely, I am a mage from the

Ice Moon Empire Mage Association.”

Was the guard captain afraid of a mage? No, he was not. He didn't believe that the young mage in front of him could be stronger than him, a martial artist. But in a one-to-one confrontation between a warrior and a mage, although they didn't hold an advantage, due to their numbers being smaller, mages had a higher position than martial artists. They were the target of every country's coaxing. Especially when he heard that Nian Bing was a member of a mage association, his hesitation had disappeared. Even a stick-thin camel is greater than the horse. Even if the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association was weak, in the end it was still a mage association, something that a low-levelled mercenary association could not afford to offend.

“Sorry, honorable mage sir. I had thought that you were a mercenary. Please forgive my rude behavior.” The guard captain dispersed his qi and spoke to Nian Bing differentially.

Nian Bing didn't desire to expose his status, but in order to lessen the trouble, this was the best decision. With an indifferent smile, he pointed at the middle-aged man on the ground and said, “If you don't want him to die, you should carry him out.”

The guard captain turned to his subordinate guards. With a look, the two other guards rushed to lift the unconsciousness middle-aged man out. With a look of suspicion, the guard captain asked, “Sir mage, since you are from this country's mage association, could you provide some information as a confirmation?”

Nian Bing creased his eyebrows and asked, “Is this necessary?”

The guard captain's gaze switched to Demonic Engraving sandwiched between Nian Bing's fingers. Nodding his head, he said, "This is necessary because I must explain this to the mercenary association."

Nian Bing smiled indifferently and replied, "What you want is this." With a flash of light, a plaque appeared in his right hand. This was what Long Zhi had given him several days before he left as a emblem of his identity.

The guard captain took the plaque from Nian Bing's hand and scrutinized it carefully. Immediately, his facial color changed. "You, you are..."

Nian Bing took back the plaque and sent it back into his space ring. "There is no need to say anything. I think you understand it well enough. I came here to find a necessary task."

The guard captain's face had already become pale. Although he couldn't believe that the youth was an elder of a mage association, that plaque was definitely not fake. How could something from a mage association be so easily imitated. Hesitating for a moment, he walked in front of the desk and told to Ma Rui, "Quickly help sir mage find a task. Don't be too slow." After dropping this sentence, he quickly left.

The surrounding mercenaries concentrated their attention on Nian Bing. For him to be able to scare the guard captain, they knew that this youth was not so simple. Moreover, he was a mage.

Ma Rui snuck a glance at Nian Bing and immediately turned, flipping through the mercenary tasks. It was just that her hands were still quivering.

Nian Bing sighed in his heart. The weak become the food of the strong. That was the rule of society. In front of Xi La De, he was weak, but in front of these people, he was strong. It seemed that no matter where he was on the continent, he would never be able to live a day in peace.

“Okay, I found it. There really is one.” Ma Rui, as if relieved from a burden, lifted up the record of the task. “Sir mage, the task you were looking for was strange so there was only one. Here, the owner of the city’s personnel guard wants rank 5 magic scrolls. There is only one stipulation: Each scroll is fifty gold coins. For every rank higher, the task reward will double. It’s a third rank task. Moreover, there were many people who took it on, currently there are seventy-three mercenaries. However, there were only two people who completed it successfully, finding a rank 5 scroll.”

Nian Bing was happy. The personal army of the city owner should have a lot of money. With a source of wealth, he immediately asked, “How do I contact the employer?”

“That is...” Ma Rui hesitated and then said, “After mercenaries have completed a task, they only have to hand over the task to us. We will contact the employer, after verifying that the task has been completed. We will then give the reward to the mercenary, while taking out a ten percent processing fee. We keep the employer’s contact details a secret.”

Nian Bing smiled casually and said, “Since it’s like that, tell me the contact details. I can complete the task.”

Ma Rui went blank for a moment, then replied, “But you are not a mercenary, and you are not even a member of this association. This is against regulations.”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “Then it is simple.” He looked at the surrounding mercenaries. The one closest to him was the brute from the Orchid Fire Mercenary Group that had received the task. After taking on the task, he had not left, but stayed to watch the commotion. Nian Bing waved him over., “This big brother, please help me.”

The stocky man went blank for a moment. Of course, he knew about the respect garnered by mages. “Me? I can help you?”

Nian Bing said, “Take on this task, and then get the gold from it.”

The sturdy man didn’t understand what Nian Bing was saying. “Our mercenary group just got this task, so we haven’t completed it yet.”

Nian Bing said with a smile, “Then you can switch tasks right now. I have a source of magic scrolls. Miss Ma Rui, this should be in line with the rules. I am staying at the Orchid Fragrance Inn not far from the association. Once the employer comes, you can send him to room 3 to find me. Just tell them that I have a few scrolls over fifth rank that I can sell.” After the exchange was complete.

He turned to the burly man and nodded, then headed out.

“Sir mage wishes to sell scrolls? Have you completed the task yet?” A deep, vigorous voice spoke. The hundreds of mercenaries in the hall parted like a tide, forming a corridor. At this moment, Nian Bing had reached the entrance. Looking along the path, he could only see a blank faced, slender old man heading towards him with the guard captain following behind him.

Nian Bing halted his steps and turned to the old man. After some time the old man had come, stood in front of him. With a smile, he greeted, “Sir mage, I am the president of this mercenary association. Could I engage you in a chat?”

Nian Bing smiled and replied, “Of course you can. I am very happy to see you, mister president.” He knew it was because of his status that he had attracted the president. Hearing his tone, he seemed to have interest in buying magic scrolls. If he could sell them all here, it would simplify matters. So, Nian Bing naturally had no reason to refuse his request.

The mercenary association president made a gesture to follow him, then led Nian Bing to the back of the association. As they passed through the hall and entered into the back room, the surroundings immediately became quiet. The mercenary association president stopped and told the guard captain, “There is nothing for you here. Go busy yourself elsewhere.” The guard captain made a noise in agreement and returned to the main hall.

“Mister mage, please come with me.” While saying this, the mercenary president brought Nian Bing further inside. While

walking, Nian Bing observed his environment. The mercenary association was connected from front to back. He discovered that he was at a courtyard. The inside of the association was decorated very simply. Everything was plain, with its main focus on functionality.

Following the mercenary association president's lead, Nian Bing arrived at a large office at the back of the association.

“Please take a seat, sir mage. I would like to introduce myself first. I am the president of this association, Ka Luo. I heard from my guard captain just now that you are actually an elder of this country's mage association. For such a distinguished guest to make an appearance, excuse me for not going out to meet you.”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “Mister President, there is no need to be polite. Actually, I am not such a high-ranked mage, but because of my master is the president of the mage association, master gave me elder status to make things more convenient while I travelled outside.” Letting people look down on him was his best defense.

Ka Luo's expression did not change. It seemed he had guessed as much. “For such a young mage to have reached the realm of an advanced mage, it's definitely not easy. Just now I heard you say that you wanted to sell magic scrolls, yes? Rather than inconveniencing others, it would be better to sell to me. Since I don't know what rank scrolls you have, we can discuss the price. I want them all.”

Chapter 39.2 – Magic Scrolls Transaction

Nian Bing looked at the plain-clothed Ka Luo with suspicion. He said, “When it comes to price, I definitely won’t back off.”

Ka Luo naturally understood what he meant. With a smile, he replied, “You can relax about that. I spoke quite arrogantly. Although our mercenary association is a low-tier, without the backing of any country, when it comes to money, we might have more than the nobles association or the warrior association. We don’t extract much commission, but the Ice Moon Empire currently has over thirty thousand mercenaries. Even if every person only paid a single copper coin as a processing fee, we would still be able to collect quite a lot of money.”

Nian Bing’s heart stopped when he realized the flaw in his thinking. That’s right! The mercenary association may not be held in esteem by others, but they are one of the largest associations. All the mercenaries in this country belonged to them. Whether it be resources or information, they definitely could not be belittled. Probably, if he wanted to learn about something, he could rely on them. Thinking about this, the smile on his face became more amiable. “President Ka Luo, please do not be mistaken. I didn’t have any other meaning, it’s just that I wanted to remind you that what I need isn’t money, or I should say, isn’t entirely money.”

Ka Luo smiled and said, “Please state your request first, sir mage. Whatever item or price, I will definitely use my utmost ability to satisfy your request.”

Nian Bing knew that that it was time to talk business. “Right

now, I have a variety of magic scrolls. I have four rank 4 scrolls, three rank 5, and two rank 6. I also have some special types of scrolls. I need you to exchange these scrolls for the best blank scrolls you have.”

Upon hearing Nian Bing’s request to exchange for blank scrolls, Ka Luo immediately smiled. “This is too simple. With our association’s networks, I definitely can fulfill your request. These ordinary magic scrolls are extremely popular in Ice Orchid City. However, I would like to hear what sort of exchange rate you have prepared? If you’re selling this many, I can buy them from you at twenty percent higher than the market price. How about that? I want all of these scrolls.”

Nian Bing said, “I want to hear the particulars of your price.” He exchanged with the other without anxiety. After all, although he had some understanding of the price of scrolls, he wasn’t completely certain. Naturally, responding calmly was the way to get the best profits.

Ka Luo wasn’t worried about quoting his price. Standing up, he offered a cup of water to Nian Bing. “Sir Mage, first drink some water. According to market value, a rank 4 scroll is different depending on what spell it is. The price could be from five purple-gold to fifteen purple-gold coins. Rank 5 scrolls are from twenty to fifty purple-gold coins. Rank 6 scrolls vary in price from about two hundred purple-gold coins to five hundred purple-gold coins. Relax, I will give you a fair price for each scroll. Generally speaking, attack-type scrolls have comparatively higher prices. You should be able to understand this.”

Nian Bing smiled and replied, “That is good. I will also quote a price to you. For the rank 4 scrolls, two hundred purple-gold coins, rank 5 scrolls at fifty purple-gold coins each and for a rank 6 scroll four hundred purple-gold coins. I think that these prices are fair.”

When he heard Nian Bing’s quotes, Ka Luo immediately wrinkled his brow. “Sir Mage, I understand the price for your rank 5 and rank 6 scrolls, but why is the price so high for your rank 4 scrolls?”

Nian Bing simply smiled and replied, “It’s easy. It’s because these rank 4 scrolls are definitely not bought anywhere else. These scrolls are what my master, Magister Long Zhi, researched: Trigger magic scrolls. Currently, only the experiments with rank 4 scrolls have been a success.” The last sentence was true. Due to the fact that trigger magic scrolls were extremely difficult to create, at present Nian Bing could only add a trigger to rank 4 scrolls. Moreover, the cost of the materials were ten purple-gold coins, the most expensive blank scrolls.

Ka Luo’s heart jumped, “Trigger magic scrolls, Sir Mage, could I ask you to explain it more clearly?”

Nian Bing said, “It doesn’t require any further explanation as it’s very simple. Anyone can keep a trigger magic scroll with them. If they encounter an attack, the scroll will automatically attack the assailant. These four trigger scrolls are all Fire Wall spells. The rank 4 Fire Wall spell is not that strong, but it’s enough to save a of anyone in possession of the scroll.”

“What?” Ka Luo cried out in surprise. He was experienced and knowledgeable. If he recalled correctly, this type of special trigger

magic scroll should have been lost several years ago. If it really could save lives, two hundred gold coins were not expensive at all. In order to confirm his thoughts, he sent out a probing question, “Sir Mage, what you just spoke of, could it be that these trigger magic scroll are nicknamed ‘The Bane of Assassins’?”

Nian Bing nodded and said, “The truth trumps words. If you can pay two hundred purple-gold coins for the test, then you will know the answer. I only hope that you will not bargain any further. These scrolls sum up to 1,750 purple-gold coins. Please exchange them for 150 top-quality blank scrolls, and the remainder for 250 middle-ranked scrolls costing one purple-gold coin each.”

Ka Luo refocused, then said, “If your scrolls really do have such a mysterious aspect, then I will agree to all of your requests. But I hope that I can try out one of your rank 4 scrolls and see for myself. Let’s go somewhere else.”

In his heart, Nian Bing thought, The mercenary association president truly is rich and imposing. Two hundred purple-gold coins for a test....

Once they arrived at the garden, Nian Bing took out a scroll from his space ring and tossed it to Ka Luo. When Ka Luo saw the magic scroll made from a top-quality blank scroll, he started to believe it somewhat. After all, an ordinary fourth rank magic scroll wouldn’t have the same price as a high-quality blank scroll. Using it to make a rank 4 magic scroll would be the same price as the scroll.

Nian Bing said, “You can put this scroll anywhere on your person. Right now, I will attack you with a spell. You don’t have to

do anything. Passionate flame elements, I request you, condense into a sphere of destruction. Explode flame, destroy everything before you – Exploding Flame Spell.” As he chanted, the fire element rapidly gathered at Nian Bing. In an instant, the rank 3 Exploding Flame spell had appeared floating in his hands. With a thought, the Exploding Flame spell rippled bright red and headed for Ka Luo. The heatwaves swept by, distorting the air around it.

Ka Luo widened his eyes. This was a two hundred purple-gold coin experiment after all. When the Exploding Flame spell was about to attack his upper torso, he sensed something unusual happening. Ka Luo clearly felt a warm air cloak his entire body as the scroll he had stuffed in his chest made a soft shattering sound. A thick wall of flames appeared in front of him without forewarning. The rank 4 Fire Wall Spell naturally didn’t have any trouble against the rank 3 Exploding Flame spell. The Exploding Flame spell was completely engulfed by the Fire Wall. The thick Fire Wall only shrunk a little bit for a moment and then returned to its normal state.

The Fire Wall continued to burn as the scroll was imbued with enough magic power to support it for several attacks from an opponent. A light flashed, and Ka Luo who was wrapped in twinkling blue qi, went up to Nian Bing around the Fire Wall. He wasn’t bitter about losing the two hundred purple-gold coins; rather his old face was full of excitement. “It’s so mysterious, truly too mystical. Magister Long Zhi is no doubt the president of the empire’s mage association. Honorable Sir Mage, no matter what spells your scrolls have, I will definitely buy them all and fulfill your request accordingly.”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “That’s good. After you’ve prepared

the blank scrolls, please come to the Orchid Fragrance Inn to find me. I will leave first.”

“Hold on.” Ka Luo called out to Nian Bing. “Honored Sir Mage, I have a presumptuous request that I hope you would agree to.”

Seeing Ka Luo’s sincere expression, Nian Bing said, “What is it, say it.”

Ka Luo sighed and said, “You may know that our mercenaries have always been the lowest of professions on this continent. We are said to be rich people’s bodyguards or hired thugs. Ultimately, the reason is because we are not strong enough. High-ranked warriors look down on our profession, so they naturally wouldn’t join. They don’t believe that mercenaries have any prospects. As the president of the Ice Moon Empire Mercenary Association, I, myself formed a mercenary group. We number about almost five thousand, founded on the long-standing cultivation of martial artists and we are the only first ranked mercenary group in the empire. If you could join our mercenary group then I think the strength of the group would increase immensely. I can offer you great rewards.”

Nian Bing smiled good-naturedly. “President Ka Luo, you are too polite. How can a mage be that great? An advanced mage would be hard-pressed to win against a swordmaster. Even if I agreed to join your mercenary group, it couldn’t make the strength of the mercenary group raise by that much, so why do you say so?”

Ka Luo shook his head and said, “No, you don’t understand. Although mages don’t necessarily hold an advantage when battling

with martial artists, but they do have familiarity with magic element. There are many tasks that would be difficult without the participation of a mage, especially exploration tasks. Your mystical magic could be of great assistance to the entire mercenary group by doing things that warriors cannot. To bring up an example, if we were in a pitch-black, moist cave carrying out a task, and you didn't have anything on you to make a fire, what would you do? Fire-attributed qi cannot form real fire.”

Nian Bing smiled and shook his head and said, “You do not need to say anymore. I am already a member of the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association, so I cannot join your mercenary association. I am sorry, but please forgive me.”

Ka Luo's eyes showed a hint of sorrow. “That's right! Why would a noble mage acknowledge mercenaries like us?”

Nian Bing said, “No, if you think that's it, that's wrong. In my eyes, there never has been a division in social standings. President Ka Luo, I have many things that I need to do, so I cannot agree to your request. However, if you really want to have a mage join your mercenary group, then I can offer you a piece of advice.”

Ka Luo's eyes sparkled. “What sort of advice?”

Nian Bing said, “For that, wait for when you give me the blank scrolls in exchange for the magic scrolls. I will give you a letter. As long as you are sincere, just bring this letter to the Ice and Snow City Mage Association and see my teacher. I think that he will probably help you.”

Ka Luo said with doubt, “Mage Association? Perhaps your teacher...”

Nian Bing cut off Ka Luo and said, “Don’t decide things before you have tried them. I have never felt that mercenaries were a ragtag mob. Of course, you shouldn’t act like that outside. Just bring your sincerity to Ice and Snow City. I think that you will be able to gain something.” After speaking, Nian Bing did not linger and left the mercenary association.

When he returned to his room in the inn, Nian Bing lay languidly on his bed. It had gone much more smoothly than he had imagined. With the blank scrolls, he only needed to spend several days time to arm himself with scrolls. He hoped that he wouldn’t meet with a beast like the golden-backed land dragon. If not, he really wouldn’t be able to suffer the loss! After prepping the scrolls, he could immediately head to the Proud Orchid Empire.

Thinking about this, Nian Bing took out the map of the continent from his space ring and scrutinized it carefully. Although he was a chef — which was convenient during travel — he was not a god. If he didn’t have any ingredients, then all of his exquisite culinary skills would be of no use. From his previous experience on the road, he would definitely find a suitable road to the Proud Orchid Empire capital, Landise. The best was if he could find comfortable lodging everyday.

Slamming down the map, he directly pounded his head. Nian Bing said to himself, I’m really so muddle-minded! How come I didn’t ask President Ka Luo just now if there were any famous

restaurants or signature foods in Proud Orchid City? I was only bothering with the scrolls. The city is big enough, and there are many businesses. They definitely would not lack any delicious dishes. While thinking about eating, he immediately perked up. On the road to Proud Orchid City, his top-level skills did not have any suitable ingredients. Every day, he could only find enough food to allay his hunger. His absolutely empty stomach had reminded him that it had been so difficult to come to this city, so how could he leave empty-handed?

Thinking this, Nian Bing put away the map and left the room. The Orchid Fragrance Inn he was staying was an unremarkable small inn close to the North gate of Ice Orchid City. According to his calculations, there shouldn't be many good things to eat here. At this time, it was already close to nightfall. Nian Bing entered the main hall in the inn, to ask the service staff if there were any famous restaurants nearby. But he was frightened by the scene that was laid before him.

Chapter 40.1 – Superb Wheat Foods

The main hall of the Orchid Fragrance Inn was about six, seven hundred square meters. A third of it was filled with counters for greeting guests and room registrations. The other two-thirds was a simple restaurant. Nian Bing had given it a cursory glance when he arrived. What he saw could only be described as decorations too horrible to endure. Each long table was uncovered, exposing the wood. The legs of the tall chairs seemed like they would break off any moment. The surrounding walls were even more worn-out – the wallpaper was not even complete. Could you really call this sort of a place a restaurant? If it not for the rooms being fairly clean, and the price being inexpensive, Nian Bing would have definitely not chosen to stay here. However, the scene before him made him unable to believe his eyes. It was barely nightfall, but there was already a long queue in front of the entrance. The restaurant was filled with customers, and there were at least ten servers shuttling around in a bustle. It was a lively sight to behold.

This sort of beat-up place has so many guests? The guests in beautiful clothing answered the question – that this run-down restaurant had some sort of operative trick, a trick that could not be separated from its food.

What sort of flavor could attract so many guests? Nian Bing suddenly became curious. He walked up to the counter and asked the attendant, “Your restaurant has so many guests! What is good to eat here?”

The attendant looked at Nian Bing’s handsome face and was unable to repress a blush. Proudly, the attendant said, “Sir, you must be from out-of-town. In our Ice Orchid City, our Orchid

Fragrance Restaurant's roasted chicken wings and City South Deng Yan Pastry Mansion's Deng Yan Pastry are our most famous delicacies. I don't know how many people have come here because of its reputation, especially to eat our Orchid Fragrance chicken wings."

"Oh?" The attendant's words piqued Nian Bing's interest. If there were such delicious chicken wings, he had to try them today. Without further ado, he strode to the end of the long line outside the restaurant without hurrying and waited patiently.

Although he was at the very back of the line and outside the main hall, Nian Bing was able to see the scene in front of the restaurant by just slightly scooting to the side. The chicken wings were fried right by the streetside. The fragrance from the roasting filled the air. Through observation, Nian Bing saw that the roasted chicken wings were lacking the drumette and the wing tip, only having the wingette. No wonder it was the signature dish of Ice Orchid City. There were two chefs in charge of barbecuing. Their movements were very quick as they continuously turned the wings over the oven. They used bamboo sticks to put on two chicken wings per skewer. Every skewer had two bamboo sticks which allowed the chicken wings to be roasted steadily over the oven. From their roasting technique, Nian Bing could not discern any special characteristics. However, he did not believe that that could be the secret to attracting so many people, so he patiently observed as he did before.

Finally, under Nian Bing's careful scrutiny, he discovered something mysterious in the Orchid Fragrance Roasted Chicken Wings – the marinade. As soon as the chicken wings were going to be cooked, the two chefs would lift up the chicken wings from the

furnace and brush on a layer of marinade from behind the oven. After brushing on the marinade, they would roast the chicken again, causing a sweet fragrance to disseminate out. The chicken wings then changed from a golden yellow to a brown and would be finished after a little bit of roasting.

That's right, the secret was definitely in the marinade. That marinade must have been specially mixed using a secret technique. Seeing this, Nian Bing became even more firmer in his resolve to try some of the chicken wings. He was not in a rush and still patiently waited in line as before.

It took time to roast the chicken wings. When Nian Bing had first joined the queue, the sky still held the afterglow of the setting sun, but when his turn came, the sky was completely pitch black. When he turned to look at the long line of people behind him, he couldn't help but sigh internally. To have business like this was really quite nice.

"Sir, what kind of chicken wings do you want, and how many skewers would you like? Also, do you want to eat here or take away?" The attendant in charge of taking money asked Nian Bing.

Recovering his focus, Nian Bing said, "How many kinds of chicken wings do you have here? I want one of each to eat here."

The attendant said, "Okay. There are four kinds of chicken wings – original, mildly spicy, single-spice and double-spice. Are you sure you want one of each skewer? Our mildly spicy chicken wings sell the best and have the nicest flavor."

Nian Bing smiled and said, “Of course. I came here because of its reputation, so naturally I would want to try all of chicken wings. How much does it cost?”

The attendant looked at Nian Bing strangely and said, “Our Orchid Fragrance Restaurant has a rule: if you buy the chicken wing then you must eat it all, especially when you dine-in.”

Nian Bing nodded and said, “Okay, please hurry up then. How much does it cost?”

The attendant replied, “The chicken wings are three bronze coins per skewer. Four skewers will be one silver coin and two bronze coins all together. Currently, there is nowhere to sit inside, so you will have to wait here for a moment.”

Nian Bing handed over his money and stood to the side. Because he was in the front, he could clearly see the appearance of the marinade. A deep brown, viscous juice filled a round bucket. The chefs used brushes to coat the juice onto the roasting chicken.

Smelling that strange sweet scent, Nian Bing continued to guess what the real ingredients of the mix were, but he could not determine its composition for certain. It seemed that he had to eat it to confirm.

Finally, Nian Bing’s four skewers of chicken wings were done. When the chicken wings were given to Nian Bing, he could not help but stare at it blankly. At this moment, he finally understood

what was single-spice and what was double-spice. The original chicken wing was finished after the application of the marinade. The mildly spicy chicken had the original flavor as the base, but was then sprinkled with a bit of chili oil. The single-spice was already extremely scary. One side of the entire chicken wing was completely covered in chili peppers. As for the double-spice, Nian Bing clearly saw that the chicken wing was put into a bag filled with chili peppers and shaken up. Using the natural stickiness of the chicken wing, every part of it was covered with chili peppers. Heavens! Is it even possible to eat this?

Seeing Nian Bing's doubtful expression, the attendant smiled. "Sir, there is still no space inside to sit right now. I must trouble you to stand here and eat. We have a rule here – if you can finish a double-spice chicken wing skewer, then you can get another for free."

Nian Bing looked at the chicken wings in his hands. First, he took a bite of the original skewer. Immediately, a thick, sweet taste filled his tastebuds. It was certainly delicious, but just as he was sighing in admiration, Nian Bing discovered the weak point of the chicken. Very quickly, the original chicken wing skewer was all eaten up. To have been able to make Nian Bing eat it this quick, this chicken certainly had its own original charm.

Just as he had finished eating a chicken skewer, Nian Bing finally could discern the ingredients of the marinade. No wonder it was that sweet – the marinade contained at least six kinds of medicinal herbs. Moreover, each medicinal herb complemented the others completely. Not only did it improve the flavor, but it also had a pretty good healing effect on the body. As expected, it had a special characteristic.

With a slight smile, Nian Bing picked up the mildly spicy chicken and started to eat it. There was a hint of a spicy flavor along with the sweetness which satisfied his craving when eating it. No wonder the attendant recommended this one, the flavor was definitely great! If it weren't for the improper techniques of the chefs, it could be better by a whole level.

Finally, he picked up the single-spice skewer. Suddenly, he felt somewhat afraid. He took a tiny bite at first, to taste it. There was no special feeling when he first placed it in his mouth; it was not even as spicy as the mildly spicy one. But a moment later, to his surprise, the flavor of the chilli peppers exploded like a blazing flame, making him immediately open his mouth. Feeling like his mouth could spit out fire, Nian Bing gasped for breath with his mouth open wide. God! Can people really eat this? It's killer spicy.

“Water, water...” Nian Bing yelled out loudly. The kind-hearted server forced herself not to smile and gave him a cup of tea.

Sweat flowed down his forehead; Nian Bing was sweating even on the inside! Just a tiny bite and already his eyes and nose had started to run. He immediately decided that these crazy chilli peppers and the mildly spicy chicken wings from before were completely different. It used a special chilli pepper. He could not deny that they were extremely flavorful, but the level of spiciness was something that Nian Bing had never encountered. God! My poor mouth. At this moment, he felt like his lips had already become inflamed. Was this a delicacy or poison?

A cup of tea later, Nian Bing's stomach was still scorching. The

power of these chilli peppers were indeed abnormal. Looking at the remaining chicken wings in his hands, he no longer had the courage to take a second bite, not to mention the double-spice. He said to the attendant, "Sorry, I really cannot eat anymore."

The attendant smiled and said, "I was just teasing you just now. There is a spot over there. Do you want any more skewers of chicken wings? These were just set down."

Nian Bing sighed in relief. Following the server's lead, he was sat down at a seat near a window. He asked, "Then could you give me a couple of original flavor skewers?" Through sampling these chicken wings, his impression of the Orchid Fragrance Chicken Wing Shop had increased greatly. Not to mention that although those six medicinal herbs weren't very expensive, when added to the roasted chicken wings, the profits lessened compared to ordinary roasted chicken wings. To show such concern for customers, the boss of this place must be a very magnanimous person.

The strength of the chilli pepper gradually lessened. Nian Bing really wanted to try a bit of the double-spice chicken wings, but he could not muster up enough courage. At this moment, it became two girls' turn to buy chicken wings. One of the girls said, "I heard that you have an extremely premium chicken wing here. Please give me ten skewers of your premium chicken wings."

When she said this, no matter if it were the inside or outside of the restaurant, the entire place sunk into silence. Everyone gazed at the two ordinary-looking girls with monstrous expressions.

“What are you looking at? Don’t tell me there aren’t any high-quality goods here? Ever since we were small we loved to eat chilli peppers, so this time, we specifically came here to try it.”

The attendant did not say anything and simply nodded to the chefs. In just a moment, ten chicken skewers were deposited into the hands of the girls.

When they took the chicken wings, the two girls were completely shocked. One of them asked dumbly, “This, where is the chicken here?” The so-called premium goods were the double-spice chicken wings! The chicken wings were completely covered by chilli peppers and could not be seen from the outside. When she said that, the whole room immediately broke into uproarious laughter.

The attendant said with a smile, “The chicken wing is inside the chilli peppers. The chilli peppers were stuck onto the chicken while the marinade was still thick and sticky. These are your premium goods! Please, have a bite.”

The girl on the left bit into it. “I don’t believe that it could be that spicy.” While saying that, she confidently took a bite into the chicken.

Nian Bing stared at the girl. He certainly had to admire the girl’s bravery.

But what else could the results be from taking a giant bite of the premium chicken wings? Very soon, the girl was crying. It was not just tears of injury. Tears and snot uncontrollably ran down her

face. With her mouth opened wide, she wanted to cry out, but no words would come forth. Nian Bing clearly saw that her tongue was somewhat swollen. He doubted that the girl wouldn't start spitting out flames.

Shaking his head with a smile, Nian Bing knew that he should leave since he had already analyzed the secret of the chicken wings. But before he could leave, he wanted to do something for this restaurant. He walked over to the girl who was unable to endure the spiciness and condensed a ball of ice in his right hand and placed it in her mouth. "It should be fine with this. From now on, don't be so reckless. The chilli peppers here are extremely amazing."

The attendant looked at Nian Bing in surprise. She did not understand where that ice cube had come from. Nian Bing smiled and said, "Could I roast some chicken wings to eat? I will pay twice the price."

Hearing these words, the server immediately looked shocked. She shook her head and said, "Sorry, the marinade of the chicken wings is a trade secret, so outsiders are not allowed to get close to it."

Nian Bing interrupted her, "Relax, I will not use your marinade." While saying this, he walked over to the two chefs and picked up five skewers of chicken wings and put it over the flame.

The chef nearest to Nian Bing creased his eyebrows. "What are you doing?"

Nian Bing wore a warm smile as he said, “I will teach you how to make the chicken wings even better.”

The chef laughed loudly. “Funny. Our Orchid Fragrance Shop’s chicken wings are renowned under the heavens. It has the reputation of being the number one chicken wings in the world. What use do we have for your teachings?”

Nian Bing said indifferently, “Foolish conceit has made your cooking arts regress. Although chilli peppers are top-quality goods, they cover the original flavor of the chicken wing. Since you believe that these are the number one under the heavens, then what is the harm in letting me try? The guests can be the judges here. If you lose, I do not want anything. If I lose, I will pay you a purple-gold coin. How ‘bout that?”

The chef angrily retorted, “Are you trying to pick a fight?”

Nian Bing shook his head. “No, I am just saying that I will teach you how to roast chicken wings.” Looking at the chef roasting chicken wings on top of the stove, he smiled lightly and said, “You shouldn’t roast chicken wings like that. Watch carefully, I will do it only once.”

Chapter 40.2 – Superb Wheat Foods

While talking, Nian Bing's right hand held the chicken wings that were starting to heat up over the open flame and turned them rapidly. The side of the chicken wing would come in contact with the open flame for no longer than a second. The two chefs stopped their movements and were smirking coldly at him. They thought that Nian Bing was making a fool out of himself.

Nian Bing's moments were very simple. Any ordinary person could do it, but it would be hard for them to keep up such a rotation tempo. From beginning to end, his speed was kept entirely steady, without even the slightest of changes. The two chefs who were roasting the chicken wings were not mediocre talents. Very soon, their original contempt was replaced with a serious expression.

Nian Bing's actions were very light. When the chicken wings started to gain a yellow hue, his movements suddenly changed. The five skewers of chicken wings lay level above the open flame. He started to flip them, skewer by skewer, from left to right in a continuous cycle in a steady rhythm, but this time the skewered wings were exposed to the fire for a longer period of time.

The chef closest to Nian Bing said doubtfully, "Even if your actions are somewhat skillful, and will make the roasting of the chicken wings more evenly distributed, the difference in flavor between ours and yours will not be that big. As long as it's not a true gourmet, they would not be able to taste the minute difference. Moreover, it is very easy to get tired this way. Do you know how much we sell per day?"

Nian Bing smiled. While roasting the chicken, he said, “It’s not at all like you think. The real crucial point has not started yet. You can relax; I will definitely not use your marinade. A bit of salt and cumin is enough.”

Soon, the difference between Nian Bing’s roasted chicken wings and the two chef’s appeared. When those two chefs were roasting, they would start to brush the oil after the chicken wings had already turned yellow as to make the chicken wings become even spicier. But Nian Bing didn’t do any of that. He only quickened the rotation speed. With a slight smirk, Nian Bing’s eyes exuded a faint light. The crucial moment had arrived.

Just as the chicken wings turned yellow and their fragrance started to disseminate, Demonic Engraving appeared in his hand without any forewarning. On one face of the chicken wing, Nian Bing quickly scored three vertical and three horizontal lines. His movements were done all in one breath without any stutters. Everyone only saw a blue light flash for a moment on top of the chicken wings, and then the chicken wings had already been flipped over and the same action was once again repeated on the other side of the chicken wing. Demonic Engraving disappeared, and Nian Bing continued to turn the chicken wings.

“Did you see that clearly? The chicken wing’s natural oil is most concentrated inside the chicken wing. There is no need to add even more oil. When the chicken wing turns golden-yellow, cut open the chicken a bit. As such, you can make the chicken wing’s oils saturate the entire chicken and make the flavor of the chicken meat more well-distributed, and will make the chicken wings even more tasty.” Having said this, he grabbed a pinch of cumin and

sprinkled it onto both sides of the chicken wings. After the chicken wings had been rotated once, he sprinkled some salt on and then continued with the roasting.

“Roasted chicken wings actually don’t need too much added condiments because chicken wings already have a naturally tasty flavor. The marinade you guys add on certainly makes the flavor of the chicken more pungent, but because of the sweetness, the entire chicken wing takes on the flavor of the marinade, and you lose the natural flavor of the chicken wing as well as the crispiness of the skin. Although it’s commendable that the added medicinal herbs to the marinade are beneficial to people’s health, as chefs the flavor should be the most important. Okay, please sample my premium roasted chicken wings.” When he lifted the chicken wings out of the oven, Nian Bing separated two skewers to give to the two chefs. Of the other three skewers, he gave one to the attendant and two the guests who were lined up closest to the front.

A purple-gold coin was tossed out from Nian Bing, which fell onto the counter before the attendant and then he strode away.

A hissing sound followed Nian Bing’s departure. Eighty percent of the guests thought that he had voluntarily conceded defeat. Nian Bing didn’t care about the false allegations and just walked along the brightly lit road.

“Wah, this tastes super good. It’s so fragrant! I have never tasted such a fragrant chicken wing before.” A guest fortunate enough to obtain the chicken wing cried out in surprise.

At the moment, the two chefs from the Orchid Fragrance

Restaurant had been reduced to a lifeless state. When the chicken wing's aroma had filled their mouths, although it was not sweet, the chicken wing's natural flavor was perfectly embodied. On top of that, the crispiness of the skin and the tender, slippery chicken meat was just as Nian Bing had said. This was the true premium roasted chicken wings! The two chefs looked at each other. One of them said, "Sorry customers. Today we have decided to temporarily close. Tomorrow, we will put out a new roasted chicken wing." Having said this, the two immediately headed to the backroom. Right now, they had only one thing on their minds – to engrave Nian Bing's every movement in detail into their memories. Nian Bing's culinary arts had completely vanquished them.

Everything was already within Nian Bing's anticipation. He had done this only because of the admirable sincerity that the restaurant held toward its customers. He believed that the two chefs were not dumb. They would definitely learn many things from his actions. By raising their cooking methods of roasting chicken wings, he hoped that their business would become even better. After all, currently there were only a few businesses who did not put profits above all else.

While walking, Nian Bing suddenly saw a restaurant not too far from him. He hadn't eaten his fill from the chicken wings from before. On the contrary, he had almost cried due to the spiciness. At this moment, his stomach was starting to get ideas. The reason that the restaurant attracted Nian Bing was because of its signboard. It was a simple sign board with only four words – Superb Wheat Foods.

Superb? To dare to use such a moniker, it seems that the owner

of this store has absolute confidence in his dishes. He wanted to go in and take a look. If it were wheat foods, there were a lot of variations on it. Nian Bing was most unfamiliar with wheat foods.

The difference in between the business of Superb Wheat Foods and the Orchid Fragrance Restaurant was like heaven and earth. There were very few guests at the tables. Moreover, a large portion of the guest only had one bowl of noodles.

“Sir, welcome. May I ask what you would like to eat?” A server greeted him politely.

Nian Bing sat down at a table and asked with a smile, “What is your most specialty dish here?”

The server smiled and replied, “Of course it is noodles. We serve every kind of wheat food here, some that you cannot even imagine. There is nothing that we cannot make. However, the prices here are relatively high. Any kind of wheat food is one gold coin.”

“What? One gold coin? It’s almost robbery.” Nian Bing stared wide-eyed at the server. It should be known that one gold coin is enough to eat a pretty good feast. For this only to be able to buy a single bowl of noodles, it is no wonder there were so few customers. But Nian Bing quickly noticed an anomaly – the guests here were primarily elderly. Moreover, each one of them wore resplendent clothes. When he had cried out in surprise, they were all looking him with expressions of contempt.

The attendant’s smile disappeared. “As the saying goes, ‘a girl

would doll herself up for a man who loves her, a gentleman would die for the patron who knows his worth.' Sir, since you doubt our prices, then you can leave now. We will not welcome a guest like you."

Nian Bing went black for a moment. They opened their doors to do business, but they would chase out guests? This Superb Wheat Foods was truly strange. He came here to try some food. There were some special characteristics here. With a smile on his face, he said, "Sorry, I was being rude just now. I just did not think that the wheat foods here would have such a high price."

The attendant looked at Nian Bing with some surprise. Obviously he did not think that Nian Bing would decide to stay. The person himself had already apologized, so what more could he say? "Then, what would sir like to eat? We can make any wheat food that you wish."

Nian Bing smiled slightly and replied, "Then give me three kinds, okay? I want five golden aromatic rings, five donkey rolls, and a plate of fried ginger twists. Please hurry up, thanks."

When the server heard Nian Bing's three foods, his face immediately contorted in surprise. He had worked here for a long time, so naturally he knew which sort of wheat foods were hard to make. Of the three dishes Nian Bing had ordered, he had only heard of the golden aromatic ring. The other two he had never even heard of them. His eyes held some hesitation when he said, "Sorry, sir, but could I ask you to pay up front?"

Nian Bing grabbed three gold coins from his chest and said, "I

can do so right now.”

The server nodded his head and said, “Please wait here, it will be ready in a moment.”

The attendant left. Nian Bing took stock of his surroundings. The restaurant was decorated simply. The wooden floorboards were made of brown wood, and the furniture was also made of wood. The entire restaurant looked clean. In the most inner part there was a roll of calligraphy, with the word ‘superb’ written on it. The brush strokes were thick and powerful, full of grandeur.

Nian Bing chose those three wheat foods and all of them belonged to a different sort of specialty food on the continent. When Zha Ji had been teaching him the culinary arts, he had said that if he could make those three wheat foods, then his skills in wheat foods foundations would be up to par. These three different wheat foods usually represented a wheat chef’s level.

“Ai, is there anyone here? I’m really hungry; get me a bowl of noodles.” A clear and crisp voice spoke, attracting the gazes of the customers to the entrance. On hearing the voice, Nian Bing immediately trembled. When he saw the red-clad figure at the entryway, he could not help but grumble and quickly lower his head. But he was sitting too close to the door, and his golden-hair was rarely seen within the Ice Moon Empire and immediately attracted the person’s attention.

A pleasantly surprised voice spoke, “Nian Bing, it’s too great. I have finally found you. It seems that my luck is really not that bad.” Suddenly appearing in the entryway was the young miss of

the Pure Wind House, Xue Jing. From her dust-covered figure he could see that she had hurried along the road. Her red warrior clothing perfectly delineated her curves. Though she looked tired, her heroic spirit had not been diminished.

Since he already been recognized, Nian Bing could only stand up to greet her. “Jing Jing, why did you come here?”

Xue Jing looked at Nian Bing’s expression and smiled. “Isn’t it to find you? You left without a word; if Ling’er had not told me, I would not have known where you left to. You are really heartless!”

Feeling the other diner’s strange gazes, they seemed to all be suspicious. Was this beautiful girl abandoned?

Nian Bing could not suppress his embarrassment. Bitterly, he said, “My aunt, you should pay more attention to your words. We are ordinary friends, no need to act like a scorned woman.”

“Peh.” Xue Jing’s beautiful face flushed. Ill-temperedly, she retorted, “Who’s a bitter woman, you’re dreaming. I came here to bring you back. Leaving whenever you want, if you don’t come back with me to the Pure Wind House, I will always follow you and annoy you every day.” Her voice was very loud, bringing smiles to the customers’ faces.

Nian Bing tugged Xue Jing to his table to sit down. “Miss, I am not deaf. You can talk quieter and I will hear.”

Xue Yang's eyes suddenly reddened. She asked in a hurt tone, "I really did not think that you would actually get up and leave. Don't tell me that I did something to make you hate me?"

Nian Bing shook his head and said in a low voice. "That's not it, please don't be mistaken. I left Ice Snow City because I had no choice! I think that not long after I left, Ice and Snow City received an order from the king to summon me. I did not want to lose my freedom, and moreover, I always aspired to travel the continent to improve and collect cooking techniques. Didn't you understand when I spoke to you before?"

Xue Jing snorted and said, "I don't really care. Anyway, if you don't come back with me, then I will travel the continent with you. It just so happens that I wanted to play anyway."

Nian Bing forced a smile and said, "How could that be okay. You are a girl. Being with a man everyday will make people gossip. Don't tell me you are not afraid that Yan Feng will be jealous?"

Xue Jing's face held a hint of a strange light. "Nian Bing, tell me honestly, do you hate me?" Her voice was very calm, but the light in her eyes showed her seriousness.

Nian Bing replied, "I just hated your temper. However, I discovered afterwards that though your temper is bad, you are lively and cheerful and kind at heart. You are definitely a good person."

Xue Jing sighed in relief. She said in a low voice, "Actually, I

always knew that my Wild Girl name was no good. When you left Ice and Snow City, I was afraid that the big part of the reason was to avoid me.”

Nian Bing replied helplessly, “Why do you always say things like that? I have already said that I left Ice and Snow City due to personal reasons. They have nothing to do with you. We are friends, so why would I bother about those things that happened in the past?”

Xue Jing smiled. “If you can say it like that, you should allow me to travel around the continent with you. After the commotion has passed in Ice and Snow City, you can come back with me and become a chef, or we can go somewhere else to set up a restaurant. I will pay and you can be a majority shareholder, and I will leave the affairs of the kitchen up to you.”